

THE ULTIMATE MUSIC GUIDE

BOB MARLEY

**NATURAL
MYSTIC**

CLASSIC
INTERVIEWS
REDISCOVERED

**POSITIVE
VIBRATION**

EVERY ALBUM,
IN DEPTH

EXPANDED
DELUXE
EDITION

Soul Rebel!

**BOB
MARLEY**

**THE FULL STORY, FROM
THE WAILERS TO LEGEND**

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

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Soul Rebel

FOR anyone who – like me – first became a fan of Bob Marley when the artist was a recently deceased musician turned benign and spiritual presence over pop music, his *Legend* album a fixture at the top of the album charts, the story of his journey from longtime music business trier to global superstar is an utterly compelling one.

Recent celebrations of what would have been his 75th birthday have occasioned an opportunity to tell in detail the story of that remarkable transformation. As you might hope, there have been vinyl editions of his incendiary, uplifting catalogue. As you might expect, there's been a new apparel line.

In late summer, there was also a touching BBC documentary, *When Bob Marley Came To Britain*, which did a great job of showing just how far Marley and the UK were interlinked. Marley at the Lyceum, and later at the punky reggae party perhaps we knew about. But Marley in Neasden in 1972?

At a school in Peckham? A
pub backroom in
Southampton?
These were
perhaps
less

charted territories on the map of the musician's unfolding greatness.

Our expanded, deluxe *Ultimate Music Guide* is your essential companion on that adventure. In addition to in-depth reviews of every album in Marley's catalogue, we've gone back into the archives to uncover some of our own pivotal meetings with the man. Reporters from *NME* and *Melody Maker* became trusted witnesses to Bob's progress, present as The Wailers laid down tracks in Kingston for what would become the *Catch A Fire* album (*MM*'s Richard Williams, in Jamaica to check out the scene with Chris Blackwell, presciently noted that this singer/composer could well be a "Jamaican genius" to match a powerhouse like Sly Stone in the USA). A year later Williams was in London joining Bunny Wailer for fish and chips, and observing a session where Marley and band were mixing "I Shot The Sheriff".

Much like Richard Williams, *NME*'s Neil Spencer first met Marley in the early 1970s and became a key conduit through which a wider British audience might come to understand something about Bob's music and the culture which had helped give rise to it. Whether reporting from punk London, or the Harlem Apollo, Neil's writing recounted the rapturous reception given to Marley's music but also the problems associated with the growth of his empire – and with being a semi-religious/political figurehead presiding over a travelling Rasta court around the world.

As you'll read here, amid the growing madness of fame, Bob's message remained ultimately a simple and relatable one: keep your heart and your mind open. As he tells Neil in 1979:

"The spirit is stronger than the flesh, which means the flesh is nothing for the spirit to carry. That mean there's a way to live. There's a way, man, it can be done."

It's a positive message that bears repeating. Enjoy the magazine.

John Robinson, Editor



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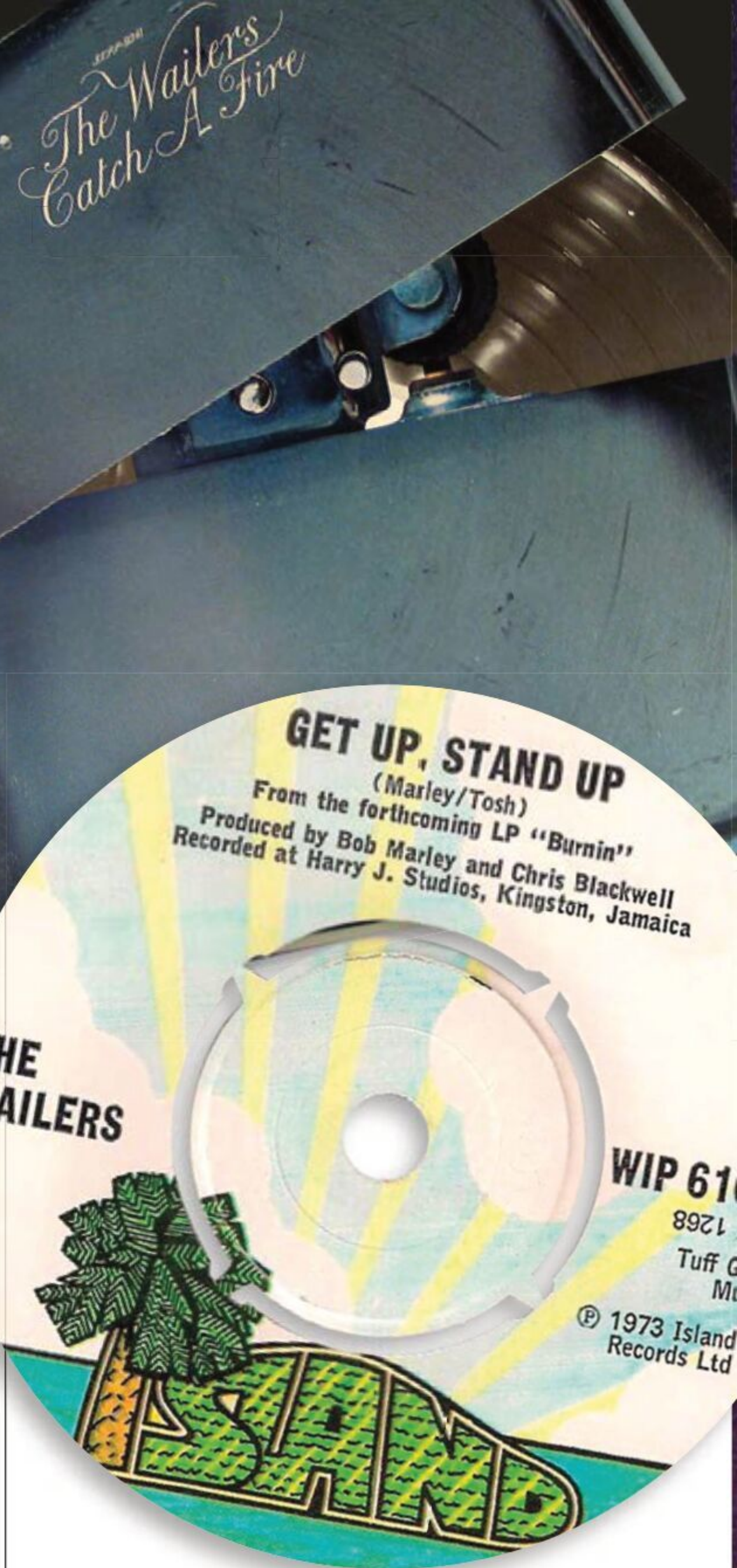
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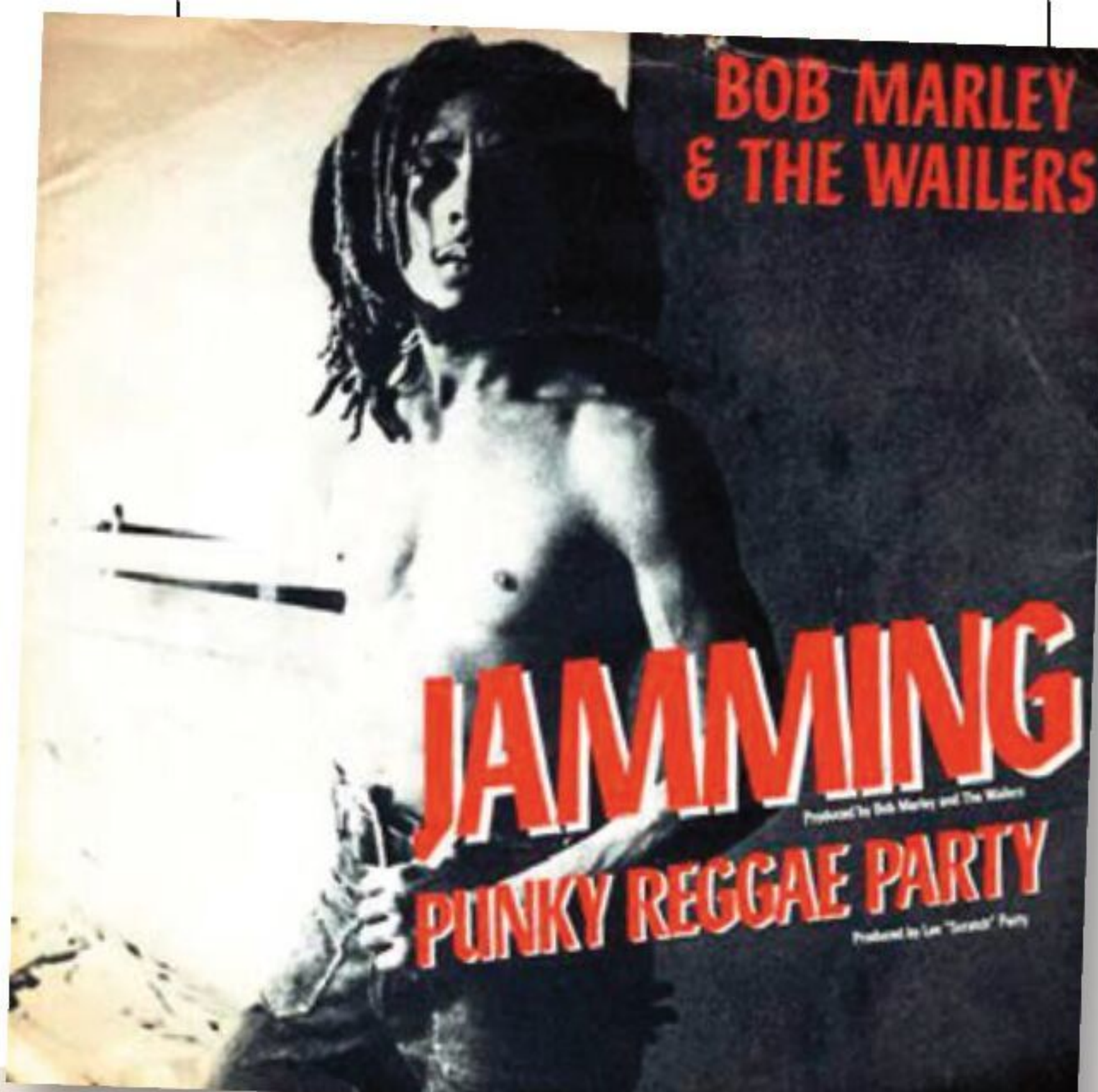
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1977: NME's Neil Spencer drops in to Marley's London pad



Live at Houtrust
Hallén, The Hague,
Netherlands,
May 13, 1977

67A
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Song
Music



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THE WAILING WAILERS

RELEASED LATE 1965

Out of a Trench Town graveyard, a teenage ska band make their first momentous steps.
***"I rule my destiny!"* BY STEPHEN DEUSNER**

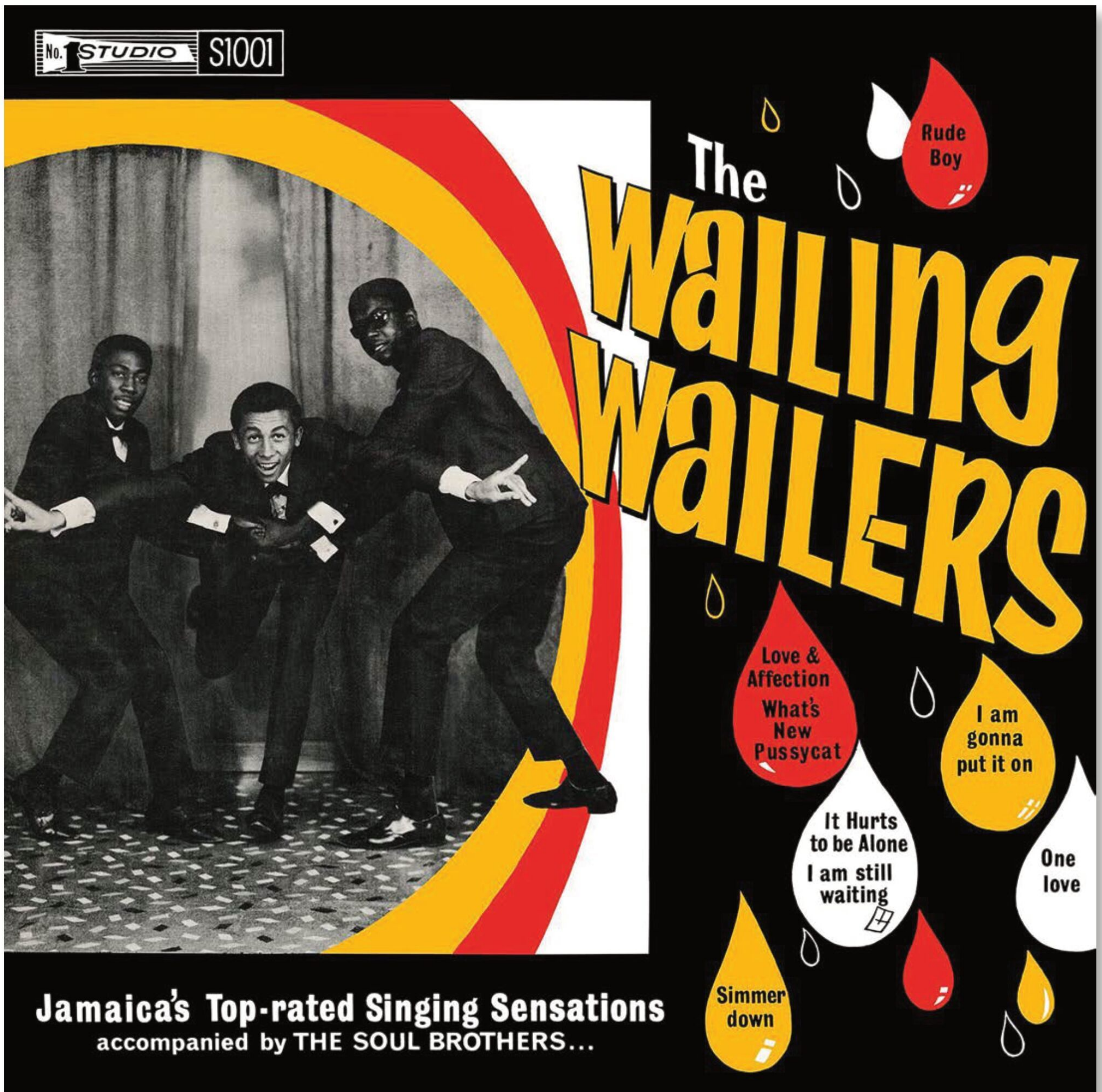
ROBERT Nesta Marley launched his career as much by gumption as by talent. Born in rural St Ann Parish, high in the mountains of Jamaica, to a local woman and an English father who was entirely absent from his life, Marley spent much of his youth in Trench Town, the government yard in the capital city of Kingston. He was one of many impoverished teenagers dreaming of something bigger and more significant out of life. When he wasn't working as a welder's apprentice (often alongside ska legend Desmond Dekker), Marley sang with friends in a vocal group and wrote songs with friend Neville Livingston, also from St Ann Parish, the two mixing simple ditties about puppy love with more serious tunes about what they saw on the streets of the bustling, occasionally violent city.

In early 1962, just months before Jamaica would declare itself a free state within the British Commonwealth, the 16-year-old Marley finagled an on-the-street audition with Leslie Kong, who operated a label called Beverley's Records out of his family's Chinese restaurant. Kong arranged studio time to record four songs with Marley, which were released on Beverley's. Marley was paid £20 and two acetates, although he didn't know anyone who owned a turntable. Of those four early solo tracks, the best is

"Judge Not", sung sweetly in Marley's teenage voice yet serious of intent. Based on Matthew 7:1 (*"Judge not, that ye be not judged"*), the song is a fine piece of early-'60s ska, with a burbling rhythm and a youthful exuberance that belies the kid's nervousness in the studio. The single failed to chart or even to generate much of an impression, but it gestures toward the sound Marley and his friends would explore on early singles, as well as the socially conscious songwriting he would favour throughout his career.

When his relationship with Kong frayed, Marley began putting more of his efforts into the vocal group he had formed with Livingston (better known as Bunny Wailer), Peter Tosh, Junior Braithwaite, Beverley Kelso and Cherry Smith. Originally known as The Teenagers because that's what they were, the group became The Wailing Rudeboys, then The Wailing Wailers, and finally The Wailers. Nervous of performing live, the group met in a local cemetery, where the dead proved a tough audience, but rid them of their stage fright.

SO soon after the declaration of Jamaican independence, the country was hungry for sounds that reflected some sense of national identity. Ska and, later, reggae filled that niche, not necessarily as conscious attempts to sound Jamaican, but as the result of musicians putting their own spin and their own beat to music from other countries. ➤



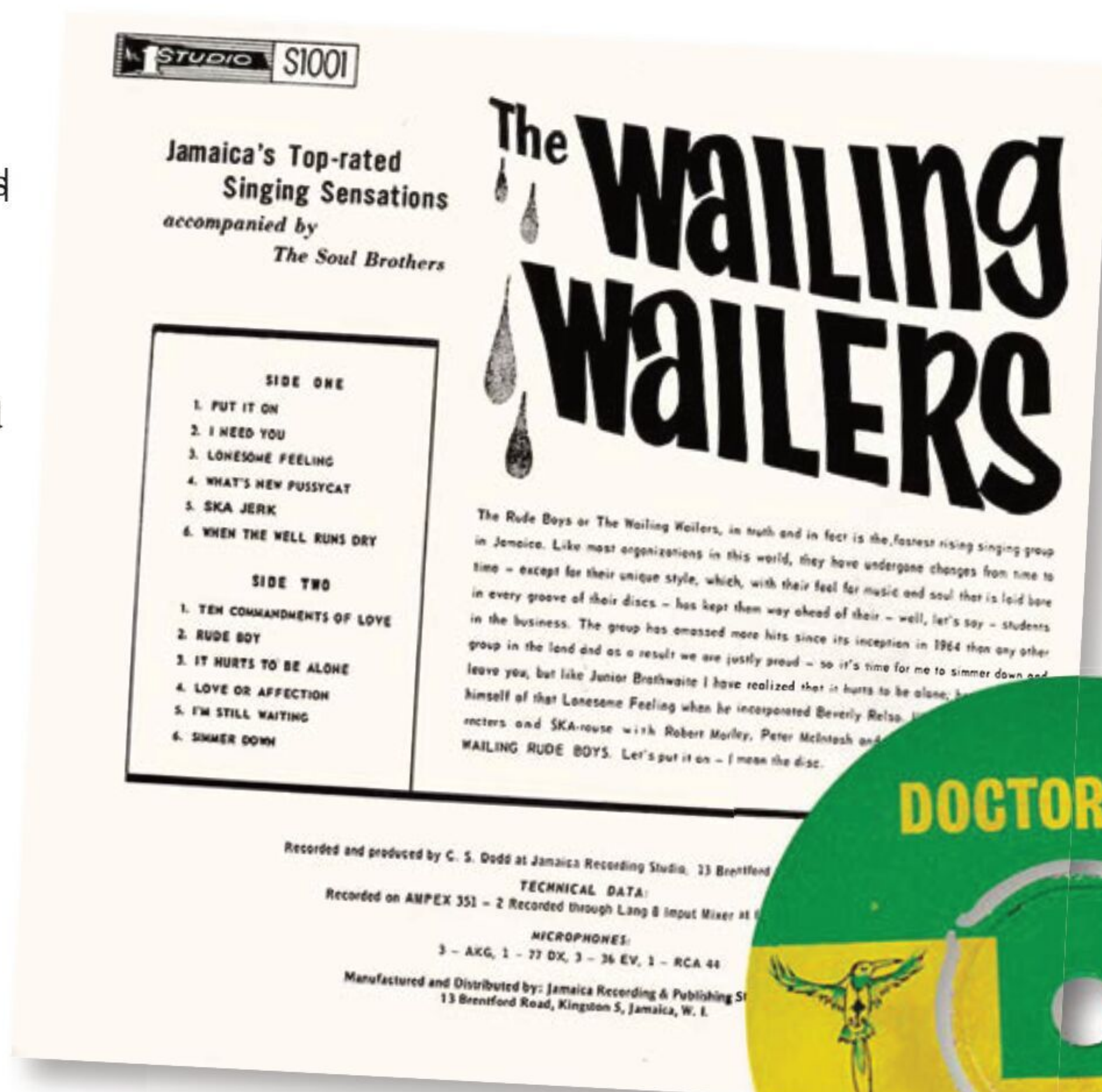
**THE ALBUM FREELY
MIXES SOCIAL
ISSUES AND
ROMANTIC ANGST**

When the weather was clear, Jamaicans could tune into clear-channel radio stations from Miami and New Orleans, occasionally even Nashville, hearing black American music – Louis Jordan, Jelly Roll Morton, and later Motown and Stax – that was not played on the country’s few radio stations, which favoured pop.

Ska was, loosely, a combination of these American sounds and Caribbean calypso and mento, with accents on the second and fourth beats instead of the first and third: essentially a rhythmic inversion of mainstream pop music. As Timothy White writes in his 1983 biography *Catch A Fire: The Life Of Bob Marley*, “Jamaican bands began covering US R&B hits, but the more adventurous took the nuts and bolts of the sound and melded them with energetic jazz conceits – particular in the ever-present horn section – and emerged around 1956 with a hybrid concoction christened ‘ska.’” It was music with a specific function, to get people dancing and moving, and even into the 1960s Kingston groups often did “do-overs” of American hits. Among The Wailers’ early material are radical reinterpretations of Dion & The Belmonts’ “Teenager In Love” and Tom Jones’ “What’s New Pussycat?”.

Radio allowed Trench Town and other poor areas of Jamaica a new sense of the world beyond the island’s shores but, musically speaking, stations such as Radio Jamaica Rediffusion (RJR) and the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC) did not reflect the country back to itself. They rarely played homegrown artists, which meant the popularity of local music could not be measured in airplay. Record sales typically had more of an impact on an artist’s fortunes, and very little did more to move records than sound systems. These roving parties were manned by DJs who wore colourful outfits, adopted outlandish alter egos and spun the latest 7” singles from the US and sometimes Jamaica. (It was not unlike the Bronx in the late-’70s, when hip-hop was born out of clandestine DJ parties.)

Among the most popular of these DJs was Clement Seymour ‘Sir Coxsone’ Dodd, who was something of a sound-system magnate in Kingston. He ran five systems at once, often made trips to the States to track down the latest singles and turntable technology, and employed a small crew of bouncers, bodyguards and hype men, including Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry and Prince Buster. In late 1962 he signed The Wailers to his Studio One label and took the group under his wing. Marley and Bunny Wailer lived at Dodd’s studio, and he reportedly bought them each a turntable as an educational tour, a means for them to hear and learn the latest sounds. The Wailers recorded a handful of singles backed by the Studio One house band The Skatalites, one of the finest groups in



Jamaican history, which included guitarist Ernest Ranglin, keyboardist Jackie Mittoo and sax player Roland Alphonso. Later the band would morph into The Soul Brothers. Many of these early ska singles would be included on The Wailers’ first full-length, *The Wailing Wailers*, released in 1964.

Their first single, and arguably Marley’s career-making moment, was “Simmer Down”, which he penned to address street violence over an insistent ska beat and a liquid sax solo. It’s a lively call and response, with Beverly Kelso singing “*Simmer down!*” and Marley responding, “*Oh, control your temper!*” As party anthems go, its exhortation to calm down and cool off might have sounded counterintuitive, but the song’s social message resonated with Kingston artists, starting at the sound-system parties where Dodd DJ’ed.

The song’s provenance has long been disputed. Some reports claim Marley wrote the track two years before The Wailers recorded it, even singing it at local talent contests, and he has explained that he wrote it for his mother as an assurance that he was not tempted to join rude boy gangs. Dodd, however, has asserted that he had as much to do with the song’s creation as any of the teenagers themselves, drawing inspiration for the lyrics from what he witnessed at sound-system parties. Even the performance credits remain contested. Some say Junior Braithwaite, 13 at the time,

sang lead, but he has said it was Marley so prominent on the track.

However the song came into the world, “Simmer Down” became a massive No 1 hit in Jamaica, eventually selling some 70,000 copies and establishing The Wailers as the hottest act on the island. They went from playing at small clubs to headlining theatres around town, including a memorable night at the Palace Theatre around Christmas 1964. When the power cut out during

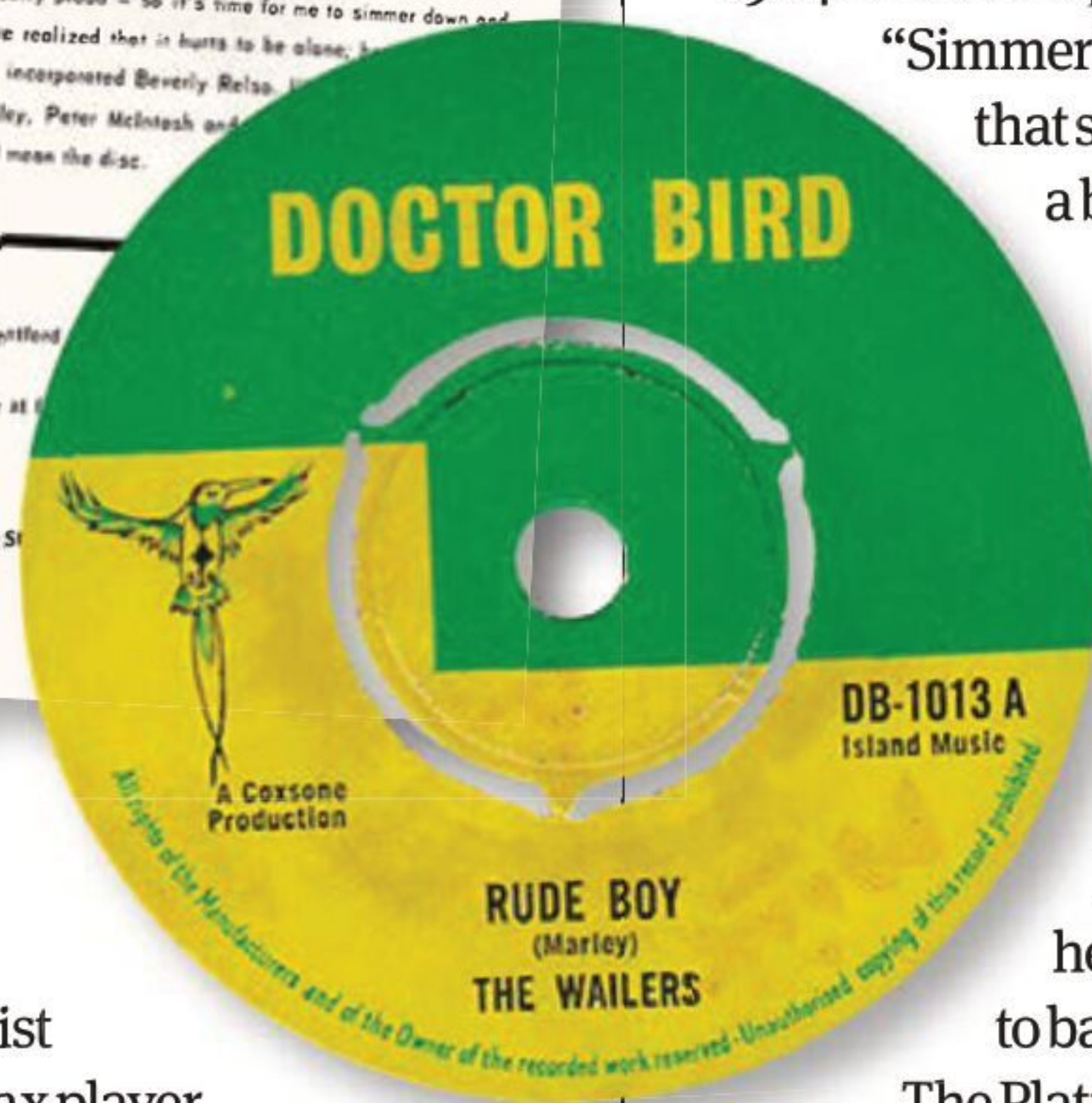
“Simmer Down”, a riot ensued that sent the band hiding in a bathroom backstage.

The group followed up that single with “It Hurts To Be Alone,” which features a downhearted lead by Junior Braithwaite and some smooth pop harmonies. Another Marley composition, it hews almost too closely to ballads popularised by The Platters and The Spinners,

suggesting he had a more natural facility for social issues than for romantic angst. *The Wailing Wailers* mixes both subjects freely, which might strike some listeners as frivolous, but might also reflect the life of a teenager in Trench Town. Most of Marley’s songs reflect the agony of a broken heart and the misery of loneliness, including “I Need You”, a tender ballad of regret and apology: “*I know I must have said a lot of things to make you,*” he sings. “*I made myself a lonely man.*”

It’s a sentiment echoed on “Love And Affection” (alternately known as “Love Or Affection”), which may be Marley’s greatest love song of the period. Not quite a ballad but certainly not a ska jam, it heralds the rise of rocksteady, opening as a broken-hearted commiseration: “*Dis was caused by love and affection,*” Marley sings. “*I was the one who feels the pain/I was the one where the heartache remains.*” It’s all the more plaintive for being so plainspoken, yet Marley adds a wink to the moaning, shouting out two of the group’s previous hits, “It Hurts To Be Alone” and “Lonesome Feelings”. Perhaps he’s only recycling phrases from his notebook, but it sounds more like an artist singing a love song to make a comment on love songs. “*Dis*” could of course be a broken heart, or “*Dis*” could be the kind of commercial success that so many Trench Town teenagers dreamed about, but very few ever achieved.

Lest you wonder what might have caused their rise, The Wailers spell it out clearly on the 1966 single “Put It On”, which leads off side one of *The Wailing Wailers*. “*I am not boasting, feel like toasting,*” they sing. “*I rule my destiny.*” That’s an idea reflected in Jamaican politics as well as Jamaican culture, although few songwriters besides Marley made free will such an explicit factor in their songwriting. That’s what guides his



MARLEY’S LATER ART-REGGAE EXCURSIONS ARE REVEALED

songs about social issues, from “Simmer Down” (which exhorts each listener to make decisions to curtail violence) to “One Love” (which understands that realising our collective spiritual potential demands individual action).

MANY of these songs would stay with Marley throughout his career and would prove central to his legend and legacy. “Put It On” popped up on 1970’s *Soul Revolution Part II* and 1973’s *Burnin’*, and Marley’s mother, Cedella Marley Booker, would include a version on her 1991 album, *Awake Zion*. The skipping beat of this early “One Love”, which borrows heavily from The Impressions’ “People Get Ready,” sounds worlds removed from the slower reggae version that would conclude 1977’s *Exodus*, and it might be tempting to dismiss that lively ska rhythm as an insufficient vehicle for the spiritual message of the song.

More largely, it might be tempting to dismiss Marley’s relatively short ska period as a mere prelude to his more revolutionary reggae material in the next decade. In some ways, this period does resemble an apprenticeship: a group of musicians learning their craft, much the same way UK acts such as The Beatles, The Who and the Stones were doing at the same time on the other side of the Atlantic. Just as those white bands were covering Chuck Berry and the Isleys to refine their chops, The Wailers were giving the “do-over” treatment to Dion, Bacharach/David and Otis Redding (“When Your Well Runs Dry”, originally known as “You Don’t Miss Your Water”), learning from these disparate sources and establishing a pop foundation upon which their later, more innovative projects would be built.

But *The Wailing Wailers* isn’t important simply as a prologue for the more ambitious musical explorations to come. Rather, it is art in its own right, burbling and rebellious, lively and energetic: a hearty cry of empowerment from the heart of Trench Town. These songs are as crucial within Marley’s catalogue as “I Wanna Hold Your Hand...” is within The Beatles’. And yet, much of the album’s life has been in limbo, a slippery and modular assemblage of music that is only just now settling into a definitive tracklist and packaging. Each reissue, beginning in the early 1970s, seemed to mutate the object a bit, whether replacing the original album art or adding new songs without changing the tracklist on the cover. Which makes the 2014 reissue via Yep Roc Records arguably the best version available to non-collectors. *The Wailing Wailers* reveals the roots of Marley’s later art-reggae excursions, but just as importantly it shows a young artist – several young artists, in fact – taking in the world around them and using these distinctly Jamaican styles of music to dream of something even better. 🗿

The Wailers in 1964: (l-r) Bunny Wailer, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh



TRACKMARKS THE WAILING WAILERS

- 1 Put It On ★★★★★
- 2 I Need You ★★★
- 3 Lonesome Feeling ★★★★★
- 4 What's New Pussycat? ★★★
- 5 One Love ★★★★★
- 6 When The Well Runs Dry ★★★★★
- 7 Ten Commandments Of Love ★★
- 8 Rude Boy ★★★★★

- 9 It Hurts To Be Alone ★★★
- 10 Love And Affection ★★★★★
- 11 I'm Still Waiting ★★★★★
- 12 Simmer Down ★★★★★

Label: Studio One
Produced by: Clement Seymour

'Coxsone' Dodd
Recorded at: Jamaica Recording Studio, Kingston
Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals), Junior Braithwaite, Beverley Kelso, Neville Livingston/Bunny Wailer, Rita Marley (vocals), Ernest Ranglin (guitar), Peter Tosh, Constantine

Walker (vocals), Jackie Mittoo (keys), Roland Alphonso (sax), Lloyd Brevett (bass), Donald Drummond (trombone), Tommy McCook (sax), Johnny Moore (trumpet), Lloyd Knibb (drums), Lester Sterling (horns)
Highest chart position: N/A

SOUL REBELS

RELEASED DECEMBER 1970

American exile. The Wail'N Soul'M record shop. Jail. And the auspicious arrival of Lee 'Scratch' Perry... Rebels awake!

BY JON DALE

IN the mid-'60s, Bob Marley And The Wailers were in something of a quandary. They had worked with Coxsone Dodd at Studio One for a good while, producing a compelling body of music that hinted at possibilities plenty, while never quite making the leap that, one senses, Marley, Tosh and Wailer were all keen to take. But almost immediately after the period covered by *The Wailing Wailers*, Marley would absent himself from the scene, spending eight months living with his mother in Wilmington, Delaware, in the USA. During his absence, Bunny Wailer stepped up as The Wailers' dominant voice; also, Constantine Walker ended up joining The Wailers.

The Wailers continued recording with Clement Dodd, releasing a batch of singles on his Coxsone imprint, on which both Wailer and Peter Tosh gave some of their most convincing early performances. Indeed, it's no surprise Wailer would later revisit some of the material of this period in 1980, on his solo album *Bunny Wailer Sings The Wailers*. Numbers like "Dancing Shoes" are joyously light, fluid numbers, the rhythm skanking while Wailer hymns the egalitarian joy of the dancefloor. On "Let Him Go (Rude Boy Get Bail)", his pleading sigh for the liberation of a rudeboy from jail,

where "*You frame him your cell, things he didn't do*" is a softly spry social commentary, acknowledging both the effect of the rudeboy culture of violence and criminality on youth ("*Remember he is smart, remember he is strong/Remember he is young and he will live long*") and institutional responses to the subculture.

It's also worth chasing up these singles to hear The Wailers taking on gospel and soul classics: Peter Tosh's "Don't Look Back", as Peter Touch & The Chorus, is a charming if slight reading of The Temptations' original, later re-recorded for Tosh's *Bush Doctor* album on the Rolling Stones' label in 1978, in duet with Mick Jagger. Some of the singles from 1966 were recorded earlier, before Marley's travels to the USA, such as "Lonesome Track", where Marley draws out the metaphor of the redemptive railway, while on the B-side, "Sinner Man" has Tosh and Wailer weaving together on a ghosted gospel number. The overarching mood of The Wailers' 1966 singles is of a group testing some of the possibilities of the music while still positioned firmly within the limitations of the genre. They're good-to-great records that don't quite fully spark.

Soon after Marley's return, the trio would split from Coxsone and Studio One, starting their own label, Wail'N Soul'M, named after the group and their closest peers, girl gang The Soulettes. Like a number of ➤



**PERRY'S WACKIER
SIDE IS ABSENT
FROM THE MUSIC HE
MADE WITH MARLEY
AND THE WAILERS**

SOUL REBELS BOB MARLEY and the WAILERS

SIDE ONE

- 1 SOUL REBEL
- 2 TRY ME
- 3 IT'S ALRIGHT
- 4 NO SYMPATHY
- 5 MY CUP
- 6 SOUL ALMIGHTY

SIDE TWO

- 1 REBELS HOP
- 2 CORNER STONE
- 3 400 YEARS
- 4 NO WATER
- 5 REACTION
- 6 MY SYMPATHY

PRODUCED BY LEE PERRY

ALL SONGS WRITTEN BY BOB MARLEY
ALL TITLES PUBLISHED BY B & C MUSICCOVER PHOTOGRAPHY GED GRIMMEL
COVER DESIGN CCS ADVERTISING ASSOCIATES

Jamaican imprints of the time, Wail'N Soul'M also doubled as a record store of sorts, run from Rita Marley's family home at 18A Greenwich Road, Kingston. It can be hard to map out the releases on the label; thankfully, a 2005 compilation on Universal, *Wail'N Soul'M Singles Selecta*, gathers together most of the rocksteady material released on the label by Bob Marley & The Wailers – note the change in nomenclature, too, a not-so-subtle sign that Marley was claiming control of the group.

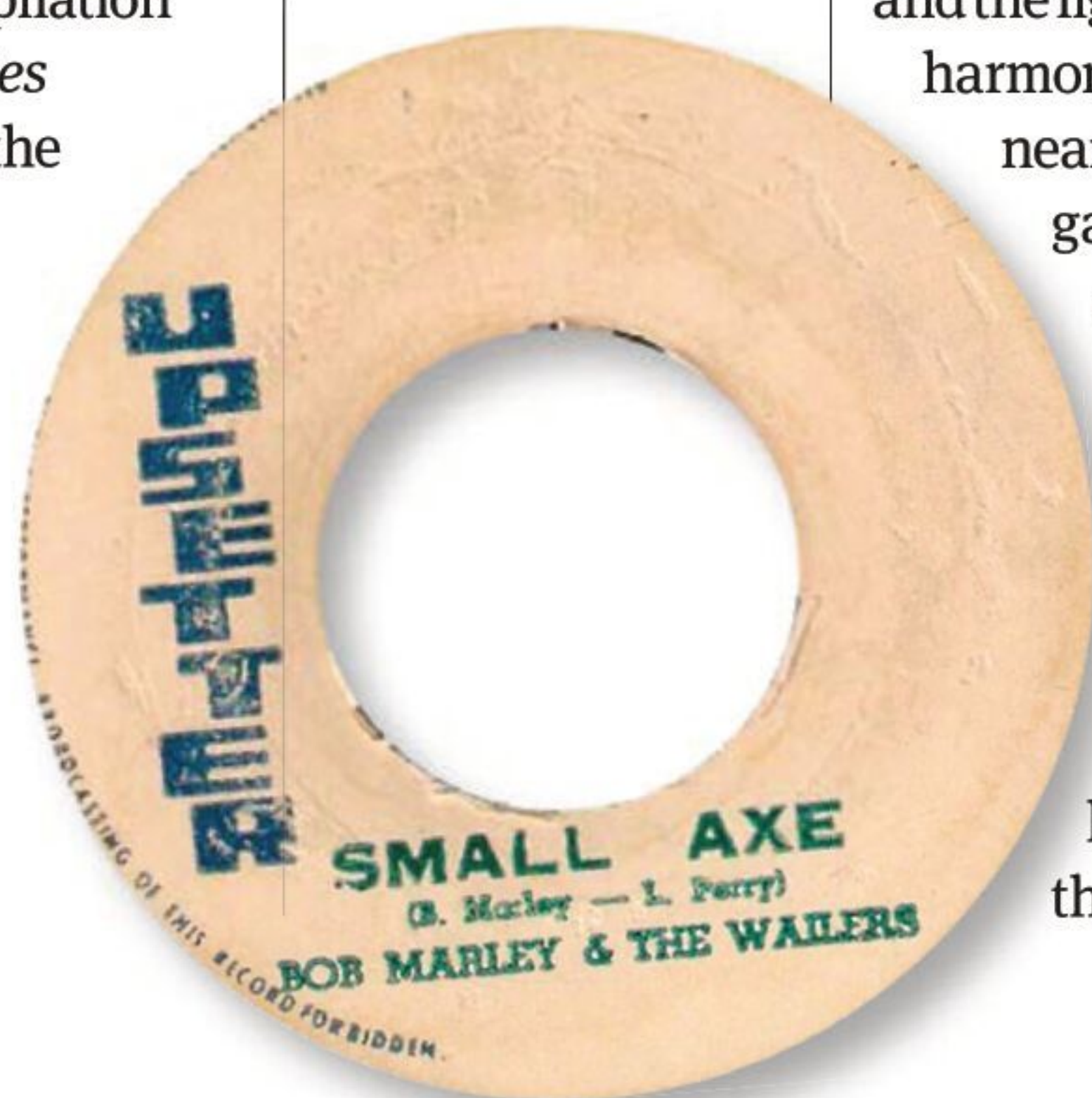
The Wail'N Soul'M era is where Marley's vision starts to come into clearer focus, while still allowing plenty of space for

Tosh and Wailer to delineate and develop their characters as, respectively, the tough guy and the spiritual visionary. The material on *Singles Selecta* is uniformly fantastic: the trio's voices had clicked, and the lightness of the backing falsetto harmonies repeatedly function as

near-hallucinatory, luscious ether gathering around Marley's warmth; a voice that carries grit and softness in equal measure. See, for example, the grain of the burr as he reaches for notes on the oblique protest song "Freedom Time". At this stage, The Wailers were marking out the limits of the terrain covered by their songs, equal parts spiritual

pleading (Wailer's gospelised "This Train", a 1967 B-side, is one of his most devastating performances on record), political commentary, trenchant socio-cultural observation and earthly sexual come-on.

The machinations of workaday life are at the root of "Bus Dem Shut", where a tough rhythm scratches out the trio's militant criticism of the 'pyaka', a term for a lying knave, always on the make. "Funeral" furthers this commentary, with one of Tosh's finest vocals delivering lines calling out the common criminal, shunned by a community that refuses to attend his burial ("But me no go (no one burial)"). Tosh's lead on "Steppin' Razor", on the other hand, casts him as the tough rudeboy – "I'm like a walking razor/ Watch my size, I'm



dangerous.” But some of the strongest material released on *Wail’N Soul’M* is The Wailers’ love songs: the deceptive lightness of “Mellow Mood” sketches pin-prick guitar motifs and lip-twirl horns over clattering rim-shot drums, while Marley sighs in gentle repose about his “love, sweet darling... Please turn out the light, I’ll play your favourite song.”

There was plenty going on in the lives of The Wailers during this time. In 1968, for example, all three members would do time in jail, Bob for a driving offence, Peter for protesting the hanging of three blacks in Rhodesia, and Bunny, most significantly, landing close to 15 months (from June ’67 through September ’68) for drug charges, the extended sentence at least in part resulting from the PM tightening drug laws, after two murders on the north coast of Jamaica. There were only five singles on *Wail’N Soul’M* during 1968, with three more in 1969, the final 45, “Trouble On The Road Again”, addressing Marley’s time in jail; the B-side, “Comma Comma”, would reach wider infamy when versioned by Johnny Nash in 1972. (Strangely, neither side is compiled on *Wail’N Soul’M Singles Selecta*.) Marley would travel to Delaware again to visit his mother in 1969, but on receiving his draft papers for the Vietnam War, he quickly returned to Jamaica.

There were a few stray sides for other labels in 1969, including an unconvincing version of The Archies’ “Sugar Sugar” for producer and label and studio owner Vincent ‘Randy’ Chin’s Impact!. The Wailers also cut some sides for Leslie Kong, eventually released on *The Best Of The Wailers*, which are covered on page 18. But the most significant development for The Wailers was crossing paths in the spring of 1970 with producer Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, whose star decisively was in the ascendant. A livewire visionary of an artist and human, Perry’s scorched-earth take on business and interpersonal politics had already landed him in the bad books of a number of significant figures in Jamaica’s music industry, from Prince Buster (see Perry’s “Prince In The Back”, his vocal debut and a stinging take-down of the presiding king of ska), through mentor Coxson Dodd (see “Run For Cover” and “I Am The Upsetter”), to Joe Gibbs, whose Amalgamated label Perry produced for across 1967 and 1968, before Gibbs and Perry fell out – see “People Funny Boy” for Perry’s takedown.

Perry’s penchant for causing a ruckus, however, sometimes reads like a shield for his developing musical and production skills. By the late ’60s, Perry was positioned at the forefront of reggae’s development, unafraid of taking risks with the music. At this point a minimalist by design, he’d often peel the music back to its skeleton, and his productions for The Wailers work with the simplest of material – rhythm section, guitar and keyboards – to wreak maximum devastation. Also his antic side, with some

of his more outsider productions featuring surprising sound effects (babies crying, or his beloved mooing cows), sometimes distracted the passing listener from the razor-sharp sophistication of the sound, even as Perry’s appeal to roots meant he, more than most, understood that sophistication was not necessarily something to embrace.

ALL of this made the Perry and Marley collaboration feel inevitable, and ideally inviolable – though the latter would end up proving rather short of the mark. They would work together for less than two years, but the music Perry and Marley made together is the bedrock of the latter’s subsequent career, and provided him with the tools to make his eventual rise to worldwide fame, a number of years later. It is also telling that Perry’s wackier side

EVERYTHING HERE SEEMS REDUCED TO BARE ESSENTIALS

is absent from the music he made with Marley and The Wailers: unlike some other musicians and songwriters produced by Perry, Marley was an unbending, principled artist, using whatever means necessary to fine-tune his aesthetic. The result is two LPs, *Soul Rebels* and *Soul Revolution* (in its multiple forms), that could lay claim to be among Marley’s strongest. At the very least, they are high up in the pantheon.

Marley had initially sought out The Hippy Boys, Perry’s then-backing band of choice, for his 1969 solo single on Tuff Gong, “Black Progress”. But in 1970, after a number of singles – some of which would reappear on *Soul Revolution*, including the classic “Duppy Conqueror” – Perry would release the first full-length fruits of their collaboration, *Soul Rebels*. Kicking off with the gentle call-to-truth of “Soul Rebel”, the album would prove particularly potent when Marley was in

CRITICS’ VERDICT

“This is a re-release of the first [sic] Bob Marley album. It’s in stereo. It should’ve been in mono. Production by Lee Perry may have been achieved by immersing the masters in lukewarm tar. Enthusiasts only, I’m afraid.” PETER ERSKINE, NME, NOVEMBER 30, 1974

confessional mode, with the deceptively spry “My Cup”, a take on James Brown’s “I Guess I’ll Have To Cry Cry Cry”, one of the album’s most powerful moments. As Perry later observed, “I said to myself, as a producer listening to an artist’s inspiration, this is a true confession, it’s the truth! His cup run over and don’t know what to do, so he need help. I didn’t say that to him, but I think about it.”

Perry’s reading of the ‘confession’ embedded in “My Cup”, of Marley’s exhaustion and withdrawal after the trials of The Wailers in the second half of the ’60s, is perceptive enough. The duo would soon end up writing together, and Marley crashed for a time in Perry’s Washington Gardens home. Perhaps this explains the intimacy and close concordance of Perry and The Wailers at this point, with the playing of The Upsetters (The Hippy Boys renamed) tight and in the pocket, a powerful buttress for Marley’s rising spiritual consciousness.

Part of the joy of the new Wailers sound, as captured on *Soul Rebels*, is the power of the reduced arrangements. Perry had sussed that the trio’s voices shine when they’re not swamped by instrumental filigree, so everything here feels reduced to bare essentials, each rhythmic component an essential cog, the guitars alternately snaky and clanging, the keyboards often the lightest yet sharpest touch, pointillist arpeggio punching through the song like a needle. It all peaks on “Corner Stone”, where a simple cowbell clank entwines with a scratchy guitar skank to propel everything forward, The Wailers’ ‘sha-la-la’ backing vocals drifting across Marley’s biblical metaphor – “The stone that the builder refuse, will always be the head cornerstone.” Borrowing from Psalm 118, “Corner Stone” allegorises Marley’s experience of being snubbed by his white father, and projects a future where Marley himself becomes “the cornerstone”. In its story lies both intense pride and intense personal pain, a combination Marley would come to know too well over the years. Decades later, in Kevin MacDonald’s film *Marley*, members of his father’s family would listen to the song with discomfort, reflecting on the Marley son’s fortunes. Abstracted from the personal, though, it also sounds out a cry to the rejected collective, to the underdogs of society, to those shunned, positioned on the exterior: your time, too, will come. 🕒

TRACKMARKS SOUL REBELS

1 Soul Rebel ★★★★★	6 Soul Almighty ★★★★★	Label: Upsetter	Bunny Wailer (vocals),
2 Try Me ★★★★★	7 Rebel’s Hop ★★★	Produced by: Lee Perry	Alva Lewis (guitar), Glen
3 It’s Alright ★★★	8 Corner Stone ★★★★★	Recorded at: Randy’s	Adams (keyboards),
4 No Sympathy ★★★★★	9 400 Years ★★★★★	Studio, Kingston	Aston Barrett (bass),
5 My Cup ★★★★★	10 No Water ★★★★★	Personnel: Bob Marley	Carlton Barrett (drums)
	11 Reaction ★★★	(vocals), Peter Tosh	Highest chart position:
	12 My Sympathy ★★★★★	(vocals, melodica),	N/A

SOUL REVOLUTION PART II

 RELEASED 1971

Another tense encounter with Scratch, as Marley debuts a clutch of songs that, over the next decade, would become legend. BY JON DALE

“WE found roots again,” was Bob Marley’s simple, clear reply when asked, in 1974, to reflect on his collaboration with Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry. It’s an observation that’s made particularly clear by the quality of *Soul Revolution Part II*, an album that features a clutch of Marley and The Wailers classics – “Duppy Conqueror”, “African Herbsman” and “Sun Is Shining” – and that stands as the most convincing rendering of the magic that happened when The Wailers’ soul and R&B-informed harmonising, and their deceptively simple songwriting, met Perry’s stripped-back productions.

The material on the preceding year’s *Soul Rebels* showed that the collaboration was already well along the path. In many ways, though, it was the singles released in 1970 that best captured what Perry and Marley were up to. The legendary “Duppy Conqueror” made its first appearance as an Upsetter 7”, more of which anon. There was also the glinting, shivery “Man To Man”, a song of unease, Marley calling out the hypocrisy of backstabbing friends, a song he would later revisit as “Who The Cap Fit”; the bizarre, ghostly “Who Is Mr Brown”, with lyrics from Glen Adams – apparently he “rides to town in a coffin” with “three crows on top and two is laughing”; and “Small Axe”, one

of the collaboration’s most enduring and melodically resonant songs, where Perry and Marley call out the three labels dominating the JA music industry (Studio One, Federal and Dynamic), with Upsetter positioned as the “*small axe*” to chop down the “*big tree*”.

Some of the Upsetter material had a decisively folksy bent, the songs unfolding as morality tales proffering a warning for the listener to take heed, while others commented on the internecine behaviours in the Jamaican music industry (hence “Small Axe”). But the most powerful of the singles The Wailers released in 1970 would be Bunny Wailer’s “Dreamland”, a heavenly spiritual that Wailer also revisited on 1976’s classic *Blackheart Man*. It was borrowed from “My Dream Island”, a song by Lackawanna, New York R&B group El Tempos. Wailer repurposes the song’s melody and replaces its lovelorn lyrics with altogether stronger words of desire for the homeland, for repatriation: a calling for a return to the source. “‘Dreamland’ represent where life come from,” producer Perry said, “Life is a dream. Judgement is a dream. Creation is a dream. It’s a real thing, it’s not a joke. We call it real magic.”

Other singles, such as “Kaya” and “African Herbsman”, would appear on *Soul Revolution Part II*. Coming at the end of a particularly fertile period for Marley and The Wailers, the album feels like a full-stop on a phase of their career, and as the last record they ➤

UPSETTER RECORDS PRESENT

SOUL REVOLUTION PART II

BOB MARLEY and the WAILERS



**SOUL REVOLUTION
PART II CAPTURES
THE PERRY/MARLEY/
WAILERS TRYST
AT ITS PEAK**

SOUL REVOLUTION PART II

BOB MARLEY and the WAILERS



Side 1

- 1 KEEP ON MOVING
- 2 DON'T ROCK MY BOAT
- 3 PUT IT ON
- 4 FUSSING & FIGHTING
- 5 DUPPY CONQUEROR V/4
- 6 MEMPHIS

Side 2

- RIDING HIGH 1
- KAYA 2
- AFRICAN HERBMAN 3
- STAND ALONE 4
- SUN IS SHINING 5
- BRAIN WASHING 6



PRODUCED BY LEE PERRY
 PHOTOGRAPHED BY GLEN ADAMS
 DESIGNED BY GUY DON COOMBS
 RECORDING ENGINEER ERROL THOMPSON
 RECORDED AT STUDIO 17

made with Perry, it marks the end of their engagement with an intensely focused production style that helped show Marley and The Wailers just what they could achieve. For many, Perry's production and coaching fundamentally changed Marley's singing: "Bob Marley never used to sing like how he sings now," reggae singer Clancy Eccles observed, "then he used to sing that way, but Perry used to sing that way how Marley sound now."

But for all the advances made, 1970 and 1971 would be a period of some professional turbulence for Marley & The Wailers, witnessing the breakdown of their working relationship with Perry, and the beginnings of their second artist label, Tuff Gong. Those tensions can be traced, perhaps, to an early

encounter where Marley tried to 'steal' The Upsetters from Perry for The Wailers' benefit. Perry "threatened to kill Bob", Timothy White writes in *Catch A Fire*, after which both parties "held a summit conference in Rema that most expected to culminate in bloodshed".

The exact provenance of *Soul Revolution Part II* is hard to accurately map. Jeremy Collingwood suggests that its initial release as *...Part II* implied that *Soul Rebels* was Part I; given the consistency in material and sound between the two albums, this makes enough sense. From there, things get foggier, with two versions of the album (vocal and instrumental, respectively) circulating under different names: *Soul Revolution*, *Soul Revolution Part II*, *Upsetter*

Revolution Rhythm... Not forgetting 1973's *African Herbsman* set, which compiled cuts from *Soul Revolution Part II* and *Soul Rebels*, with a few singles added. It's all a bit of a mess, but not a surprise given the complex business 'arrangements' that were endemic at the time. (You're best off picking up the Trojan double-CD set, *Soul Revolution Part II*, featuring both albums in their entirety.)

These business arrangements led to some of the tensions between Marley and The Wailers and Perry, and the partnership's eventual dissolution. They weren't aware of some of Perry's international deals for their albums, and Marley fumed after seeing local copies of *Soul Rebels* on record-store shelves while travelling in England – Perry hadn't mentioned that he'd licensed the

album to Trojan. Similarly, Marley was nonplussed when he discovered *Soul Revolution Part II* had been released on Maroon without his consent. The Wailers would also have other complaints: they were unimpressed by the tacky sleeve of *Soul Rebels*, though *Soul Revolution Part II*, with its toy guns, was little better.

It's all a shame, as the music they created had the capacity to immediately transcend the complications of shady business. *Soul Revolution Part II* features some of The Wailers' most seductive melodies, with Perry guiding them onto tape with the minimum of fuss, just whatever the song requires. They would also benefit from Perry's eagle eye for detail and his unending energy for practice, pressing the group into ongoing rehearsals in the back of the Upsetter record store. But Perry's bond with Marley would also prove to be a thorn in the sides of both Tosh and Wailer; indeed, the latter had never trusted Perry.

The material on *Soul Revolution Part II* was recorded across late 1970 and 1971, and captures the Perry/Marley/Wailers tryst at its peak. It's an album that's regularly touted as the one where The Wailers found their métier, a collection of songs of greater depth and confidence than before, and the fullest blossoming of their sound so far. The LP kicks off with "Keep On Moving", The Wailers grabbing hold of The Impressions' song and filling it full of their fantasia, with each member of the vocal trio taking a verse in turn. With the bass ascending and descending a simple register like a see-saw in perpetual motion, and sizzling cymbals crashing at unexpected junctures, it's a song where the musical devils were in the details. One of the results of Perry's pared-back production was that the tiniest shift in dynamic or texture had a profound effect.

"Don't Rock My Boat" has Marley singing a tender romantic paean, his voice winding trills around the thread of the melody, his repetitions of syllables – "You satis-satis-satis-fymy soul" – suggesting a chipping away at the protagonist's heart, the compulsion in the repetition gesturing toward the romantic confusion that undergirds the song. If satisfaction is here, or to come, it's fleeting and uncertain: the contrasting steady state of the flinty guitar skank that drives the song forward seems in tension with Marley's melancholy.

The following "Put It On", by comparison, feels luxurious, at times radiant, even through the murk of the production, as The Wailers' blissful harmonies reappear. Originally recorded a number of years earlier, and recast as a spiritual thanks to Perry's intervention, at first the song seems to deliquesce in front of your ears, though Perry's ingenious production eventually ramps up the song's energy levels, with the percussion increasingly active, seemingly carving up the air in the studio itself as drummer Carlton Barrett accents at right angles, pulses the song into syncopations

and punctuates its religious fervour. "Fussing & Fighting" and "Duppy Conqueror" feel of a piece. The former is one of Marley's calls for the cessation of ghetto violence, as you could gather from the title. The latter, a signal cut from this phase of The Wailers' career, is one of Perry's most deliciously spacious productions for Marley, with gentle delay clattering under the guitar, an organ percolating away, teasing the cochlea, while Marley struts the streets. One of Marley's most enduring songs, its lyrics and I-IV-V chord change would turn up, of all places, borrowed by Sonic Boom on Spacemen 3's "I Love You", from 1991's *Recurring*, where he sings, almost directly quoting Marley, "Yes my friend, my good friend, will set me free/ I've been accused..."

Peter Tosh opens the following "Memphis", huffing away on his melodica,

IT'S TOUTED AS THE LP WHERE THE WAILERS FOUND THEIR MÉTIER

while the group plays a sweet and sinuous groove underneath, the guitar and bass slowly sliding up the fret, a continuation, in some ways, of the glide and stealth of "Duppy Conqueror"'s physicality. Slight but lovely, it's good to hear Tosh's more measured side through his playing on "Memphis", a nice counterbalance to his tough-guy stance. "Riding High" has Wailer on lead vocals, an entreaty to a "jiving" female, "like a peacock, that's your style". When Wailer soars into falsetto for "Ooooh, wait 'til I get my hooks on you", it's one of...*Part II*'s most breathtaking moments.

The sweet hymn to herb, "Kaya", follows, paired with "African

Herbsman", a tribute to a local character, that adapts "Indian Rope Man" by Richie Havens. It's one of the album's most sinuous productions, a crackling guitar figure chattering over thumping bass and a ticking-clock snare, while The Wailers weave some of their most rigorously complex vocal arrangements across the song. But again, it's one of The Wailers' love songs that really shines on *Soul Revolution Part II*'s second side – "Stand Alone" is simply gorgeous, a sweet swoon of shimmering melancholy.

Wailer's "Brain Washing", clipped, full of nervy energy and jangling with tension, closes the album: it's a strong performance but lacks either definitive punch or compelling mystery. If anything, *Soul Revolution Part II* should have ended with the beguiling "Sun Is Shining", where the entire song feels enveloped in heat haze, a melodica reeling out counterpoint to Marley's devout proclamations. Revisited and significantly extended on 1978's *Kaya*, there's something to be said for the way this version cuts short, just nudging the two-minute mark – in its suggestiveness lies part of its magic, what's left unsaid all the more pregnant with potential meaning.

The subsequent 'version' album, *Upsetter Revolution Rhythm*, allows the listener a more intensive listen to the magic of The Upsetters' playing and Perry's instrumental production. It's a great LP that suffers for two reasons – firstly, without The Wailers' mesmerically woven harmonies, it lacks some character; secondly, it's not a 'dub' of the vocal album, rather a simple presentation of the instrumental tracks. With the benefit of hindsight, an opportunity to extend *Soul Revolution Part II*'s achievements was missed.

But it does serve as an oddly appropriate end to The Wailers' tenure with Perry. Marley would patch things up with the producer and work with him again, albeit on rare occasions; the other two Wailers wanted nothing further to do with Perry. Without the producer at the helm, it's doubtful they'd have achieved the leaps of confidence that gave the world two of reggae's richest, most lasting albums. It was a temporary *entente cordiale* that, somehow, still resonates. 9



TRACKMARKS SOUL REVOLUTION PART II			
1	Keep On Moving ★★★★★	6	Memphis ★★★
2	Don't Rock My Boat ★★★★★	7	Riding High ★★★★★
3	Put It On ★★★★★	8	Kaya ★★★★★
4	Fussing & Fighting ★★★★★	9	African Herbsman ★★★★★
5	Duppy Conqueror ★★★★★	10	Stand Alone ★★★★★
		11	Sun Is Shining ★★★★★
		12	Brain Washing ★★★
		Label: Upsetter Produced by: Lee Perry Recorded at: Randy's Studio, Kingston, Jamaica Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, guitar), Peter Tosh (vocals, melodica), Bunny Wailer (vocals, percussion), Alva Lewis (guitar), Glen Adams (keyboards), Aston Barrett (bass), Carlton Barrett (drums) Highest chart position: N/A	

THE BEST OF THE WAILERS

RELEASED AUGUST 1971

Sweet soul music and fatal curses: the tangled tale of how The Wailers first aimed for the big time and missed. BY JIM WIRTH

HAD Leslie Kong lived longer, he might have come to regret working with The Wailers. As Bob Marley's star ascended, the producer's huge international successes came to be overshadowed by the fact that he had recorded and released the superstar's first single sides, way back in 1962. Worse still – if legend is to be believed – working with The Wailers cost him his life.

The most detailed version of the Bunny Wailer curse story comes in the late *Rolling Stone* writer Timothy White's *Catch A Fire*, his fine but occasionally over-lurid Marley biography, first published in 1983. Just as The Wailers were regaining some dancefloor kudos with the help of Lee Perry, they were incensed to discover that Kong was planning to release an album, *The Best Of The Wailers*, composed of the tracks he had recorded with the trio in May 1970. Bunny Wailer came to have it out with "the conniving Chinese-Jamaican" at the ice-cream parlour he ran with his brothers at 135A Orange Street, Kingston. "Don't do it, mon," Bunny is quoted as telling the producer. "It cannot be de best of de Wailers, 'cause our best is yet ta come. When yuh seh dat de best of someone has gone, den dat person is already dead or soon dyin', so we don' wan' dat."

Kong reputedly shrugged his shoulders, standing his ground in front of the "good-sized crowd" that had

gathered to watch the argument, and claimed that it was too late – the album was already being pressed.

"If yuh do dist'ing, I prophesise dat it is yuh who will die," Bunny apparently retorted.

A few weeks later, on the same day that his accountant was supposed to have come to inform Kong he was now a millionaire, the producer left work early, complaining of feeling ill. He died that night, August 9, 1971, aged 38. "The coroner was puzzled by the case," wrote White. "Kong had no history of heart trouble. The young producer's untimely demise made no medical sense."

In the dread spirit of Old Testament-style retribution that The Wailers embodied at their alpha male mid-'70s peak, it was the perfect story – a vengeful god striking down the unrighteous double-crosser. There may be some truth in it – The Wailers would definitely not have been delighted at naff product tumbling on to the style-conscious JA market just as their cred-stock was rising. However, it's a myth that has served to distract attention from The Wailers' reasonably craven – and entirely unsuccessful – attempt to court mainstream success.

These songs were recirculated on a good deal more misleadingly titled, low-budget comps once Marley made it big, but while *The Best Of...* may not embody the social concerns and Rasta thunder of the band's peak work, it is sinuous and playful instead. Check out Marley's burbling "Soul Captives" and the sensuous "Do It Twice". It also has killer tunes, Tosh's "Stop The Train" and his soulful excavation of "Go Tell It On" ➤

THE BEST OF THE



WAILERS

SOUL SHAKE DOWN PARTY • SOUL CAPTIVES • CAUTION
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN • CHEER UP • CAN'T YOU SEE
STOP THAT TRAIN • BACK OUT • DO IT TWICE • SOON COME



WHILE THIS MAY
NOT EMBODY
RASTA THUNDER, IT
IS SINUOUS AND
PLAYFUL INSTEAD

THE BEST OF THE



1. Soul Shakedown Party

2. Stop The Train

3. Caution

4. Soul Captives

5. Go Tell It To The

Mountain

6. Can't You See

7. Soon Come

8. Cheer Up

9. Back Out

10. Do It Twice

Bonus Tracks

11. Soon Come version

12. Soul Shakedown Party version



beverley's records

135 b Orange Street, Kingston, Ja., W.I.

The Mountain" – a reminder Marley once had competition as the band's leader.

Reggae historian David Katz characterised the late '60s and early '70s as the "lost cat" years of The Wailers' career. In 1970, Marley was in his mid-twenties, married to Rita and with three children to care for. The band's career had been put on hold at various times; Marley moved to Delaware, where his mother lived, doing factory work to make a living; Bunny Wailer spent 14 months in prison for possession, with Rita Marley drafted in to replace him. Going somewhere in the ska era, when they were recording hits for Coxsone Dodd, their career lost momentum as rocksteady became the dominant form. Linking up with visiting US singer Johnny Nash in 1968

had kept the band afloat financially, but the group released only a couple of new singles that year – tantamount to retirement in the fast-moving Jamaican pop market. With hits not coming, they sought a plan B – or perhaps a return to square one.

'Robert Marley' recorded his first single sides – "Judge Not" and "One Cup Of Coffee", released in 1962 and 1963 respectively – for Kong's Beverley's label, both being licensed to Island in the UK, where Kong was a founding partner. Later rumours suggested bad blood between Marley and Kong – mutterings of unpaid fees – but in 1970, The Wailers were prepared to let bygones be bygones. It was them who approached Kong, eager to update their silhouette for the skippy

tempos and horn-free arrangement of early reggae, and mindful that no-one stood a better chance than Kong of making them big stars. "He was there from in the ska era and he made the most chart music in the 1960s and '70s, but the younger people don't really know about Beverley's," fellow producer Bunny 'Striker' Lee said of Kong, adding: "I don't why he doesn't get the credit for it. He's still unsung."

Kong may not have been an innovator, but his records sold. There were skinhead favourites like The Pioneers' "Long Shot Kick The Bucket", The Melodians' "Rivers Of Babylon" (as later covered by Boney M), as well as The Maytals' "54-46 Was My Number" and "Monkey Man", both crossover hits in the UK. More significantly,

he sculpted Desmond Dekker's 1967 international breakthrough "007 (Shanty Town)", and 1969's "Israelites" – a No 1 in the UK and Germany and, more stunning still, a No 9 hit in the reggae-averse USA.

One of a number of notable Chinese-Jamaicans in reggae – along with producers Herman Chin Loy and Joseph Hoo Kim, and Dragonaires leader Byron Lee – Kong might be referred to more as an entrepreneur than a music man. As his nephew, roots artist I Kong, remembered: "Les told me: 'I never see a Chinaman dance yet! I don't like dancing because I have two left feet' ... The music to Uncle Les was not his life. So there is a difference between a man who lives it as his life and the one who is using it as a job, a means of bringing in some bread."

However, regardless of his motivation, Jimmy Cliff still reckoned Kong to be "such an inspirational person", the "Wonderful World, Beautiful People" hitmaker remembering, "He always had brilliant ideas: 'Why don't you do that? How could you do that?'" Kong is also remembered as a fair-dealing businessman, and one who – regardless of his ability to dance – put together a killer house band for his sessions.

Kong's Beverley's All-Stars studio wrecking crew – marshalled by pianist Gladstone 'Gladdy' Anderson – moved seamlessly with the times, while creating bright, rubber-soled rhythms, aimed firmly at mainstream success, and when they teamed up with Kong, that was what The Wailers wanted. The tracks that would make up *The Best Of The Wailers* are recognisably reggae, but with a significant nod towards the of-the-moment, soul-into-funk sounds of Sly And The Family Stone, The Impressions and James Brown. Check out the Funkadelic threads sported by The Wailers on the sleeve for further evidence of their stylistic debt to America.

Once they came into the studio, it was Tosh rather than Marley who seemed to the All-Stars to be running the show. Killer guitar player Lynford 'Hux' Brown recalled: "The serious one was Peter, as he was the musician out of the three. He understood music more than Bob and Bunny because he was a good guitarist himself, and so he was more talkative. He'd give us directions and say things like: 'No, man, give us a bit more of this and that', or 'Let me try this'. The other guys were just singers, really."

Tosh has four lead vocals to Marley's six on *The Best Of The Wailers*, with "Stop The Train" – later retitled and slowed down for use on *Catch A Fire* – the most memorable. Here, it is The Wailers' bad boy's anguished plea for justice in a cruel world. "All my good life I've been a lonely man/Teaching people who don't understand," Tosh belts out. "Even though I've tried my best, I still don't find no happiness."

The Wailers' Rastafarian beliefs would become more explicit as time went on, but Tosh's firmest nod in that direction here is his subtle rearrangement of the African-

American spiritual "Go Tell It On The Mountain", merging the ecstatic sentiments of the original with the Old Testament trials of Moses and the Israelites, his "set my people free" a clear nod towards the Rasta ideal of a black homeland.

However, Tosh's mind is on less lofty things for his remaining contributions, as he plays the wronged lover on "Can't You See" and the playful "Soon Come". The former is a soulful belter, Tosh telling his perfidious amour: "Told me you love me, that you break my heart/You do such a trick girl, you got to be smart." A little more dancefloor friendly, the latter finds him being fobbed off by a skittish partner. "I don't like hanging around, or to be pushed around," protests Tosh. "I've got feelings for you now – I don't like the soon come."

Tosh's songs bristled with bruised masculinity; Marley's were groovier, laidback, less nasty. Kong chose "Soul Shakedown Party" – backed with an instrumental version – as his first 45 from

THE HELP WAS A DETOUR RATHER THAN A BLIND ALLEY

the session, Marley delighting in getting some one-on-one time with the object of his affection: "This is my invitation/I've got the special vacation/I need your concentration/Just to feel your vibration." He is hoping for an audience of one again on "Do It Twice", chosen by Kong to close the album. Here, Marley is eager to prove his love to his partner – though his motivation may not be entirely pure: "I'd like to say: 'Baby, you so nice'," he sings, seamlessly switching to bedroom chatter. "I'd like to do the same thing twice."

"Caution" was also released as a 45 on Beverley's – though the radio-

play-minded Kong apparently excised the risqué "hit me from the top, you crazy motherfunky" refrain to avoid controversy. It was – according to White, who met Marley enough times to know – inspired by Marley's arrest for travelling in an unlicensed car one rainy night in Kingston. With some great falsetto assistance from Bunny Wailer, he subtly weaves that story into a more spiritual warning: "Caution, the road is wet, black soul is black as jet." Whether that counts as a Rasta sentiment is a moot point, and the same goes for the mellifluous "Soul Captives". With its "tra-la-la-la-la" chorus, it is finger-popping catchy, but – given Kong had not long struck big with "Israelites" – it's easy to see why he might have thought Marley's lyric an infringement of spiritual copyright. "When you wake up early in the morning, and you work like devils in the sun," he sings, "time slips away without warning, but freedom day will come."

A similar embattled optimism informs the bouncy "Cheer Up", Marley chivvying along the downtrodden in the certainty that better times lie ahead. "We've been down in captivity, so long, so long," he sings. "We unite, we will be free."

Two further lost songs – "Baby, Baby, Come Home" and the intriguing-sounding "Sophisticated Psychodelication" – were recorded for Kong, but the only other one that made it out was the oddly vituperative "Back Out". "Shut your mouth," Marley keens, bawling out the as yet unidentified "Mistress Martin". Fairly incoherent, the incongruous middle-eight refrain of "sweet soul music" (a nod to Arthur Conley's 1967 hit) would suggest that it was done a little absent-mindedly on the hoof.

The same, many would say, goes for the whole of the *The Best Of...*, the

Kong cuts coming to be seen as a creative nadir – a sell-out compounded by a rip-off. As the jaunty tempos of reggae geared down towards the heavyweight austerity of roots in the mid-'70s, these songs seemed jarringly lightweight, but The Wailers did not come to Kong to be cutting edge. They wanted hits, and didn't get them, so they moved on. It was a detour rather than a blind alley – a mixed blessing, not a curse. 🐼



TRACKMARKS THE BEST OF THE WAILERS

1	Soul Shakedown Party ★★★	6	Can't You See ★★★	& Warwick Lyn Recorded at: Dynamic Sound Studios, Kingston Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals), Peter Tosh (vocals, melodica), Bunny Wailer (vocals), Gladstone Anderson (piano), Winston Wright (organ), Paul Douglas (drums), Jackie Jackson, Lloyd Parks (bass), Lynford Brown, Rad Bryan, Lyn Taitt (guitar) Highest chart position: N/A
2	Stop The Train ★★★★★	7	Soon Come ★★★	
3	Caution ★★★★★	8	Cheer Up ★★★	
4	Soul Captives ★★★	9	Back Out ★★	
5	Go Tell It On The Mountain ★★★★★	10	Do It Twice ★★★★★	
Label: Beverley's Produced by: Leslie Kong				

"The Jamaican Genius"

Autumn 1972. In Jamaica, Island Records' Chris Blackwell is looking for the most raw and exciting reggae he can find.

RICHARD WILLIAMS joins him for a revelatory trip into the record shops and studios of Kingston, where he meets Joe Higgs, Toots & The Maytals and Carlton Lee before gatecrashing a session at Harry J's studio. There, Bob Marley & The Wailers are working on *Catch A Fire* – "Something," notes Williams, "which might well shake the world."





MELODY MAKER
30/9/1972

“WHAT must be kept in mind though, about Jamaican – West Indian – society is that it was servile. The only completely slave culture in history.”
– John Herne, Jamaica

“Slave-driver, the table is turned/

Catch a fire, an’ you will get burned.”
– Bob Marley, “Catch A Fire”

“The child from a (Jamaican) dialect-speaking environment will find the writing of Standard English difficult today because he or she is accustomed to the use of words, idioms, and constructions which go back, to our certain knowledge, to the age of George III.”
– HP Jacobs, Jamaica

“You Wrong Fe Trouble Joshua”
– Title of reggae song

“H EY MAN, why you gon’ work feh dat whitey?”
The voice bawls scornfully across Third Street, a road like any other in the shanty towns of Kingston, Jamaica. The speaker, who sits on the steps of a tumbledown shack, is a Rastafarian. His nappy hair, grown long and matted, is to Western eyes surreal.

Joe Higgs is the object of his derision. For Joe is climbing into the battered Moke of Chris Blackwell, founder and owner of Island Records and offspring of a Jamaican banana plantation-owning family.

After brief banter, observed with interest by a small boy clad only in a raggedy T-shirt, and a goat which roots idly in a pile of garbage, the matter is settled. The Rasta is mollified, and Joe and Chris drive off.

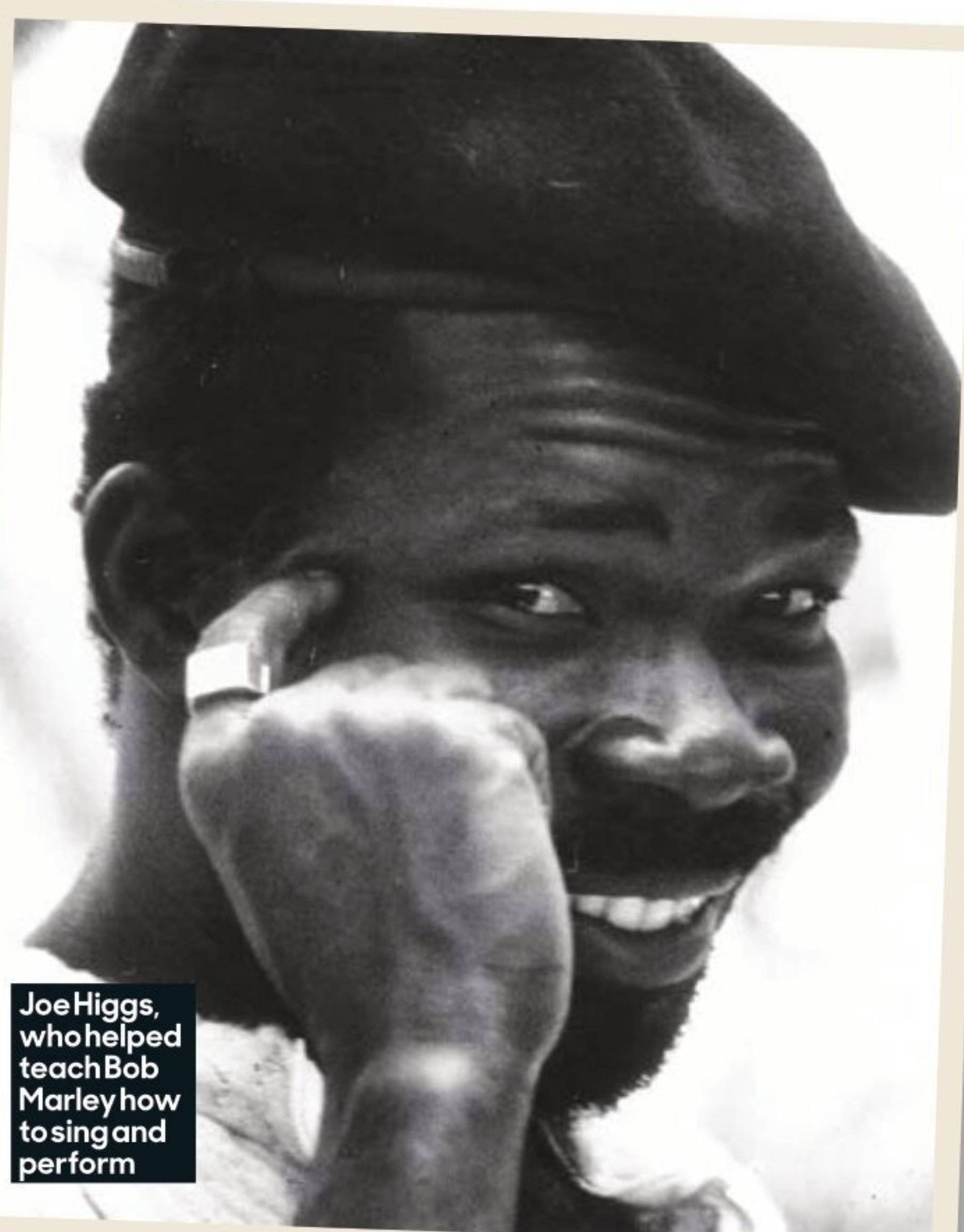
On a wall by Joe’s shack, there’s a badly printed fly-poster. It reads: “Hello Dance Fans Yes Its Here Again – With Rasta Joe (From Up Town) And Sister Lee: BLACK SUPREMACY NO 1.”

Despite its ethnic balance (90 per cent black) and its distribution of wealth and status (which still heavily favour the white), the island of Jamaica does not appear to contain the seeds of another Watts or another Harlem.

Commentators see this as something of a miracle, in view of the island’s lurid history as a centre of the slave-trade from the Spanish conquest led by Columbus in 1494 until Emancipation in 1830. Think about this: more than three-quarters of the island’s 2,000,000 population are the descendants of slaves who were born, mated, and often despatched in the most degrading conditions imaginable.

Perhaps the comparative calmness of the black population has something to do with the widespread smoking of ganja (supremely hi-fi grass) which flourishes in the country areas.

Ganja-smoking is illegal, and jail sentences begin at 18 months, but it’s widespread, overt, and vital to the pattern of life in much of Jamaica. “These people don’t smoke it to get high,” said a young black man.

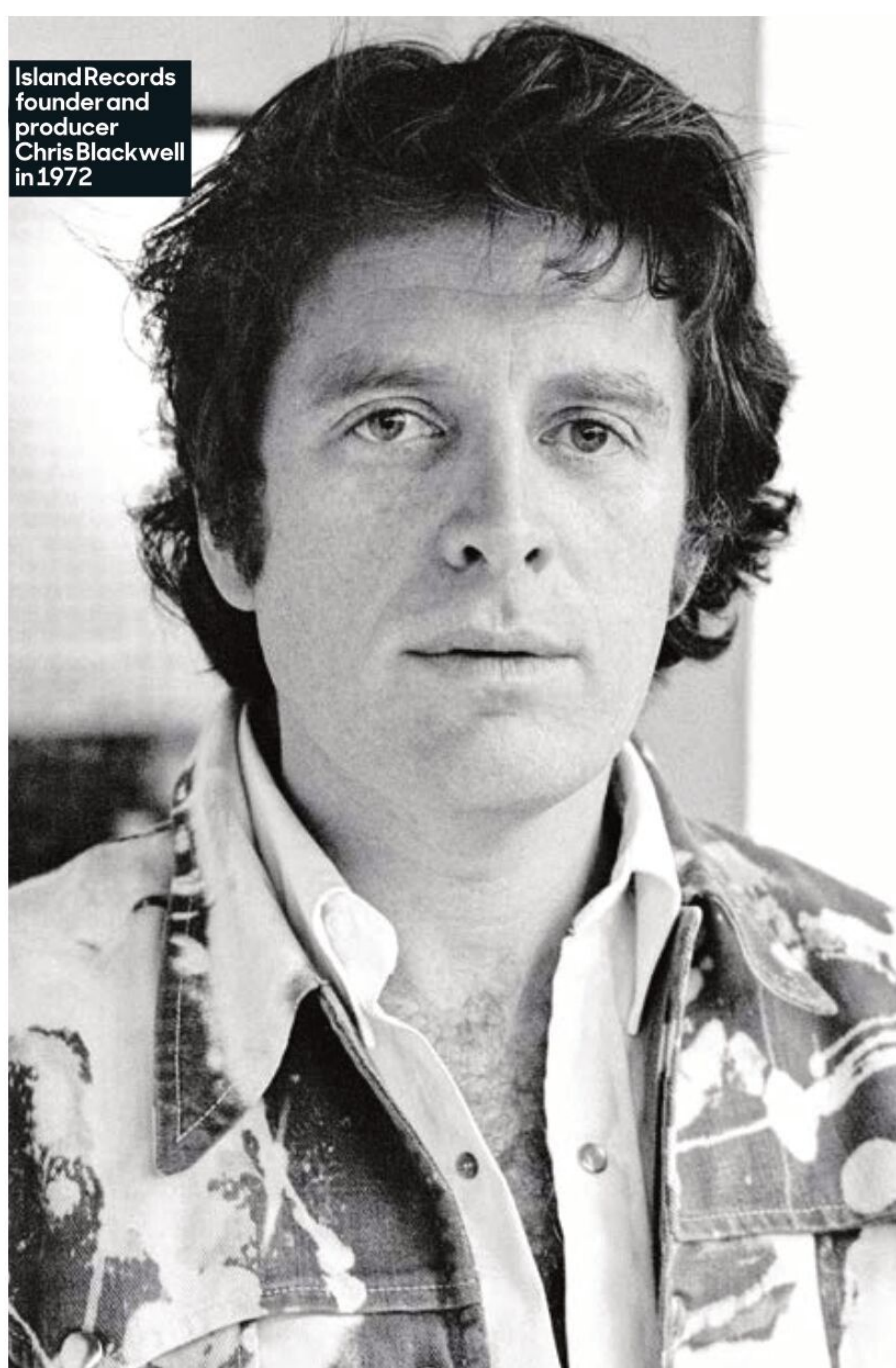


Joe Higgs, who helped teach Bob Marley how to sing and perform

“They smoke it for wisdom.” His seriousness was not in question.

To the Rastas, who worship Haile Selassie of Ethiopia as their God (“Jah”) and who don’t touch alcohol or ordinary tobacco, ganja is a sacrament – their bread and wine. They are unsuitable candidates for bloody revolution; since their formation 40 years ago, their greeting and farewell has been “Peace and love”.

“PEOPLE WON'T GIVE REGGAE ARTISTS ANY RESPECT”
CHRIS BLACKWELL



Island Records founder and producer Chris Blackwell in 1972

JOE HIGGS, himself a Rasta, began singing in 1956 as an amateur. In 1960 he was professional with a fairly successful duo called Higgs & Wilson, who had several popular records on the Wirl label.

Now aged 30, Joe is a very talented singer, writer, and guitarist. Yet he lives in a house, the rent of which has been fixed by the government at the equivalent of 60p a month, and needs occasionally to take work as a dental assistant. The ordinary workers who live round him might, in a good week, earn £8. As like as not, they won’t earn anything.

Joe has no idea of how many records he’s sold in the last dozen years. He’s never seen any sales figures, and is unaccustomed to the idea of being paid royalties.

In the music business of Jamaica, robbery and piracy are the rule rather than the exception. If you’ve seen the movie *The Harder They Come*, you’ll know that the big record producer offers the young singer 20 Jamaican dollars (£10) for all rights to his song and his recorded performance – and the scriptwriter did not exaggerate for dramatic effect.

A producer will offer just that kind of sum, and even if the record goes to No 1, the artist will see no more money from the record. Furthermore, if the record looks like becoming a hit elsewhere in the Caribbean, the producer will respond to orders from retailers by recording a new version of the song with an artist in whose career he’s more interested, and export that instead. The original singer-writer, of course, benefits by not so much as a cent.

Right now, Joe reckons that his time might just have come.

“I’ve always tried to find that ideal person to work with,” he says, and he’s currently got a record out called “Let Us Do Something”, on the Elevation label, under the auspices of Byron Lee, owner of Dynamic Sound label and studio, and himself a noted reggae artist.

“Let Us Do Something” is a terrific record. Joe sings with a deep, mournful, Havens-like burr, against a memorable “Freedom... freedom” chorus, and his musical imagination shows up in the intro, where he juxtaposes his own acoustic guitar against a gentle bowed double-bass. The lyric, with its understated message, is very moving. It’s catchy enough to be a British hit, and Chris Blackwell has acquired the international rights to the record from Joe.

For Blackwell is out to try and introduce Britain to real reggae – not the watered-down imitations which usually make the British chart. He’s after breaking records with that raw sound which makes the island charts, the kind of music you hear blaring from massive speakers outside record shops on bustling Orange Street.

The shops don’t just sell reggae – they’re also responsible for making much of it. Almost every shop manager has dreams of being a producer (it’s how many of the top men started), and most of them have a pile of acetates under the counter which they pull out and play now and then, either for a visiting record company man or just to see how the buying public reacts. Blackwell

calls it a “kind of brokerage”. There’s Herman Chin Loy, for instance, who runs the Aquarius Record Store at Half Way Tree. Blackwell goes to see him, and flips over some scratched acetates which Herman plays.

The music on them is extraordinary: instrumentally it’s jagged, freaky, disjointed reggae, with a fast beat and marvellous bass work, overlaid by the chaotic sound of a wild party. It’s a bit like “Double Barrel” gone mad.

British listeners react uneasily to this kind of shouting, seemingly gibberish, on a record. But it comes from the Sound System men, the travelling disc-jockeys who are the spine of the Jamaican music. They’ve always yelled encouragement to the dancers over their mic while the records are on, and the sound has been carried over onto the records themselves, so that everyone can turn his front room into a discothèque.

Blackwell is more than interested in Herman’s acetates, and wants to take them back to Britain so that he can listen to them at greater length. But Herman, his thinking conditioned by years of dealing with crooks and pirates, is suspicious. He opines that maybe Chris will just take them and put them out, without paying.

Herman’s internal struggle is a sight to behold, but eventually he partially conquers his suspicions and lets Chris take away a couple of the discs. He looks as if he doesn’t hold out much hope of seeing them again.

Driving away from the shop, Blackwell chuckles philosophically at Herman’s attitude. He sympathises: “Listen, he’s got every right to feel that way. Lots of people would pirate this stuff if they got half a chance.”

Chris even tells a story against himself, about the time he ripped off the sound of an American record: “I had a copy of Homer Banks’ ‘A Lot Of Love’, and I gave it to Stevie (Winwood) and told him to write a song with that bass riff... ‘Da-da-da-da-boom’.”

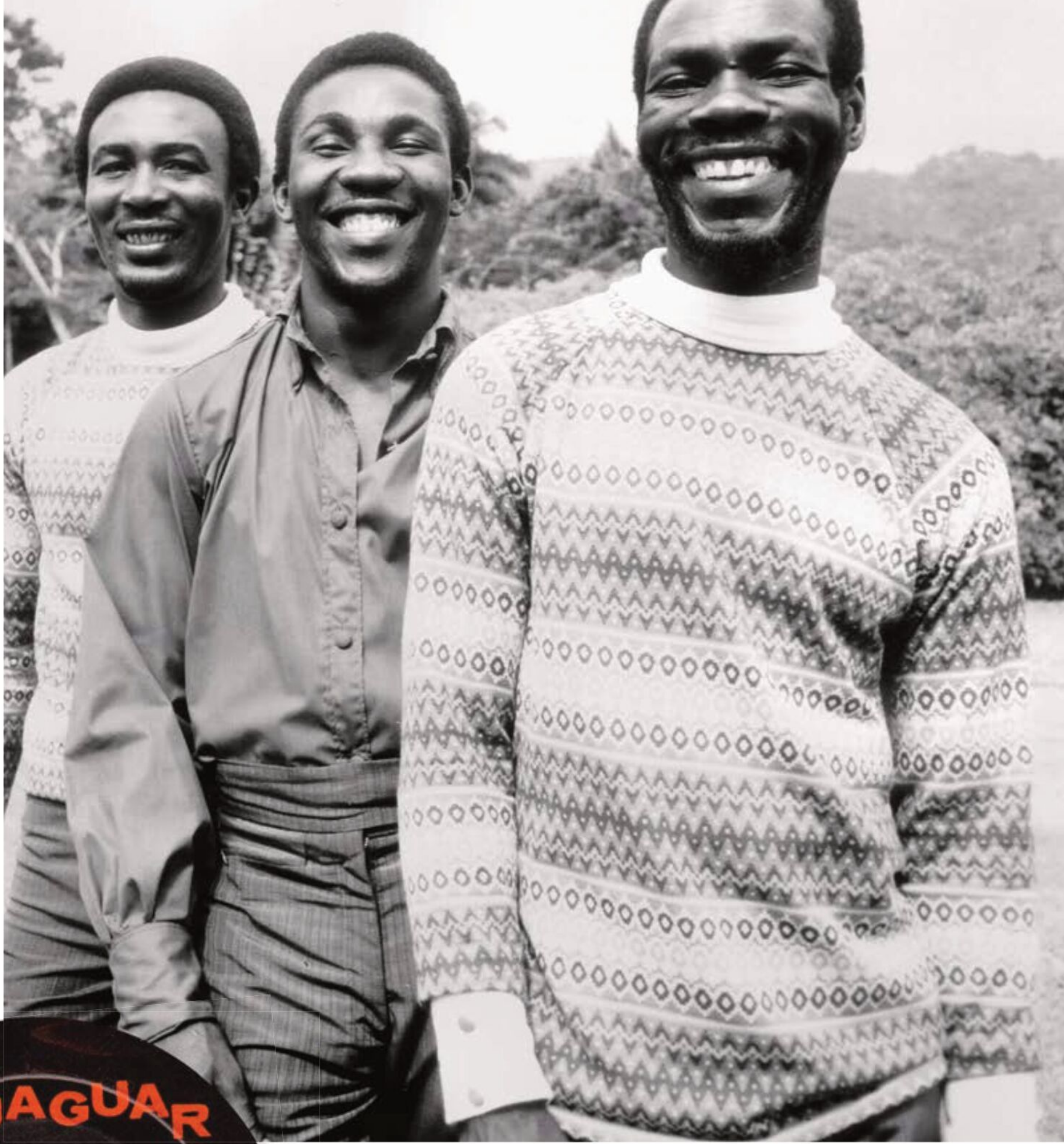
That turned out to be “Gimme Some Loving”, a chart-topper – but the funniest thing, says Chris, is that Stax (for whom Banks now works) have just clobbered the bassline from one of Blackwell’s old records, “The Liquidator”, for a recent Staples Singers smash “I’ll Take You There”. The world is round, but it’s crooked just the same.

DYNAMIC SOUND Studio is the one featured in *The Harder They Come* – and it’s where Paul Simon went to cut “Mother And Child Reunion”. Its eight-track board probably mixes more hits than any other on the island.

Right now Blackwell and the studio’s Chinese engineer, Carlton Lee, are preparing for a session with the Maytals, one of Jamaica’s most popular vocal groups.

There are three Maytals (bigger groups are rare simply because fees and royalties are too small to be split four or five ways), but the main man is definitely Derek Hibbert, better known as Toots – in fact their last record, a reggae version of “Louie

Jamaica’s most popular: Toots & The Maytals – makers of “Pressure Drop”



Louie”, was billed as being by Toots & The Maytals.

Their history goes back to 1962 and the heyday of Blue Beat, when Coxsoné Dodd produced their hits “Hallelujah” and “6 And 7 Books Of Moses”. They’ve

been big ever since, with things like “Pressure Drop” and “54-46” – the latter titled by Toots after his prison number when he was inside on a ganja-possession rap.

Yet, despite their success, Toots still lives in an area not dissimilar to Joe Higgs’. That’s because there’s no income from live performances in Jamaica – everything is geared to records, and to the Sound System. So a performer with a hit record can’t make the best part of his living exploiting that success in clubs and concerts, like a North American or British artist would.

“The singer has always had the same status as, say, a gardener over here,” says Blackwell. “Jamaica is a very middle-class place, so the vast

majority of the people won’t give reggae or its artists any respect. Until recently, too, the singers weren’t interested in getting royalties. They sang the song, and they wanted the cash for it – just like doing any other job.”

Over the course of the next hour, the musicians assemble in the studio, wander round chatting, take out their instruments, and warm up. On organ there’s Winston Riley (producer of “Double Barrel”), on guitars Huks Brown and Radcliffe Bryan, on bass Jackie Jackson (who drove to the studio in a new Viva GT covered with tiger-skin vinyl), on drums Winston Grennan, and on piano a cat called Gladdie.

“Great pianist,” whispers Blackwell. “They call him ‘Stoner’ because he’s stoned all the time. Between takes he goes out and stares at the sun... so he’s going blind. Crazy.”

The air fills with the pungent ganja odour as the musicians start getting together a reggae version of “Tumbling Dice”. The choice of the tune is Blackwell’s idea, and the only snag is that nobody knows the words. Toots has spent hours trying to pick Jagger’s diction out of the Stones’ messy mix, and having failed, he’s making up his own words.

As they get into rehearsing the tune, it’s obvious that this doesn’t matter, because Toots’ natural

ebullience and power make a lyric redundant anyway. He's a real shouter – obviously influenced by Otis Redding, yet totally devoid of the American's subtlety. He just fixes his eyes on the ceiling, opens his lungs, and lets rip.

The studio is funky, with no attempt to make it aesthetically pleasing. The musicians sit in a little circle, the drums surrounded on three sides by low sound-baffles and, as they play, their empathy becomes obvious. Their resemblance to the studio cats in Nashville is obvious. When they cut a song, all they need to know is the chord sequence, and they'll do the rest. In a way it's machine-like, but no machine ever produced anything half as groovy.

A reggae rhythm section is a carefully balanced thing. Unlike pop music or R&B, no two players duplicate the same pattern. Whereas in pop you might have two guitars, two keyboards, bass and drums all playing basically straight eight-notes, in reggae all the different patterns fit together like a jigsaw. The parallels which spring to mind are with Sly and with the McLaughlin/Bruce/Williams/Young edition of Lifetime.

The drummer plays eight-notes on his hi-hat, accenting the normal off-beat with rimshot and bass drum. The rhythm guitarist plays a double-time offbeat, a sharp up-stroke four times per bar. The bassist leans heavily on the first note of each bar, leaving lots of space on the second half of the measure (this lends the music that curious half-floating, half-plodding quality). The pianist adds cross-rhythms, while the organ plays brief, simple melodic phrases.

In this case, the extra added ingredient is Huks Brown. His lead guitar is like nothing heard before, a combination of repeated riffs and flickering single-string figures counterpointing the vocal. His pick blurs as he turns a single note into a staccato flutter, drops into a plain riff for the bridge, and then adds emphasis to what he's just played by falling silent for a moment. A Jamaican Steve Cropper, who may well become a cult hero one day.

It doesn't take them long to get a couple of good takes down, the only difference between them being that Toots sings better on the second. Towards the song's fade, he was shadow-boxing with the mic.

"I tried overdubbing him once," says Carlton Lee. "It didn't work at all – no life in it. But recording live like this, there's no stopping him. Sometimes he gets so worked up that he goes right off the mic."

Listening to the playbacks, Chris compliments Carlton on the drum sound he's getting, adding that he's failed in every attempt to get the same raw-edged quality in British studios. Carlton replies that it's the natural sound of the room, and it's the reason he hasn't built a conventional sealed-off drum booth.

The musicians return to the studio, and Toots begins to teach them one of his own compositions. Over here, the session men are paid by the tune – a minimum of £5 a song.

This can lead to complications for producers like Blackwell: "I like to have long tracks that I can edit where necessary, but these guys just stop playing after two and a half minutes, because they figure that's all you need for a single record. So I pay them at least double the basic rate to make sure that they carry on for up to five minutes."

Dynamic Sound is one of the five companies in Jamaica which can produce records from start to finish, owning pressing plants as well as studios. The others are Federal, Coxson (owned by Coxson Dodd), Mr Ray, and Recording Specialists.

There's a tradition in Jamaica that some pressing plants make a bit on the side by a "one for you, one

BOB MARLEY IS AT ONE WITH HIS ART AND TOTALLY IN CONTROL

for me" system of manufacture. Which means that the independent record company, with no pressing machinery of its own, never knows how many copies of a record have been made. The system of distribution is such that retailers don't bother to ask whether or not a box of discs has come from a legitimate source.

A RECORD which makes the top of the Jamaican chart will sell maybe 25,000 copies. The biggest hit ever to come out of Jamaica was Desmond Dekker's "Israelites", which stomped up the American lists and eventually sold two and a half million copies. A not-unlikely candidate

to follow "Israelites" to international fame is the record which has topped the Jamaican charts for the past four weeks: a new version of Baby Washington's "Breakfast In Bed" by a girl named Lorna Bennett. Miss Bennett, aged 20 and reet petite, was discovered by Harry Johnson aka Harry J, of All-Stars and "Liquidator" fame.

Harry is a short, compact man with gunfighter studs down his black jeans and a brand-new bronze Pontiac Grand Prix parked outside his own eight-track studio, situated in a middle-class residential district. In the locked glove compartment of the Pontiac there's a stubby Colt Police Positive .45 calibre, and the left-hand side of the gun is slightly rusty, from lying in his pocket and soaking up sweat. He explains that he often returns to the studio in the early hours, after a party or a gig, and he wouldn't be surprised to find a prowler with a knife there one night.

Chris and Harry are in the studio, poring over contracts which would give Blackwell the international rights to Miss Bennett's single, and her subsequent product.

Harry tells us that Lorna is a law student at the University Of The West Indies in Kingston, and she's the first girl to top the charts in Jamaica since Millie Small with "My Boy Lollipop" in 1964 – incidentally, Millie was discovered by Blackwell.

Chris is backing another winner here. Lorna doesn't sound like a reggae singer – her voice is too pure and poppy – but it fits the sultry, sensual mood of the song, and a brilliant brass arrangement (by bassist Geoffrey Chung) tops it off. It's a natural hit record, on any market in the world.

But tonight, the main focus of attention is what's going on in the studio. Blackwell's been looking forward to this hour for a long time.

In there are Bob Marley & The Wailers, which will mean nothing unless you happen to own two ska classics which appeared in Britain in 1966, both by the Wailers and both on Island: "Put It On" and "He Who Feels It Knows It" (with its magnificent soul-ballad B-side, "Sunday Morning").

Marley, who sings and composes and plays guitar, is perhaps the heaviest cat in the island. If you consider that Sly Stone and Marvin Gaye are American geniuses, then Bob Marley might well emerge as the Jamaican genius.

The other Wailers are Peter Mackintosh (vocals and guitar) and Bunny Livingston (vocals, bass and drums). They've been together for several years, recording first for Coxson and more recently for their own little label, Tuff Gong, which operates out of the small record shop they own on King Street.

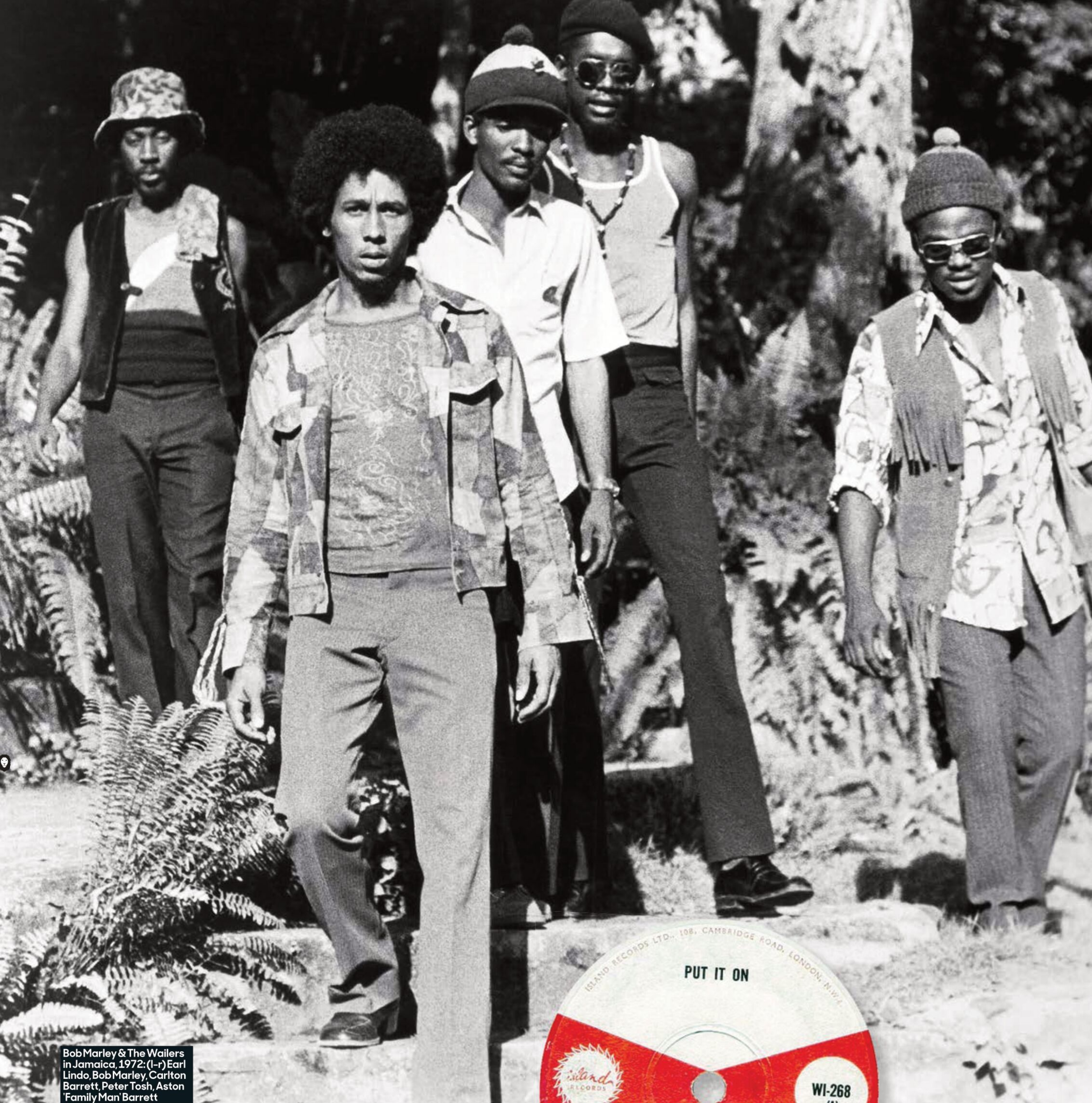
The shop is decorated with Wailers' pictures and press cuttings, but pride of place is given to a picture of Haile Selassie on horseback "in the uniform of a Field Marshal". Tuff Gong's latest hits are the Wailers' "Satisfy My Soul, Jah" and Rita And The Soulettes' "I've Been Lonely". Rita is Mrs Marley.

In Harry J's studio, the group is preparing something which might well shake the world. They're laying down overdubs on the rhythm tracks for an album which ought to awaken everyone to the power of the island's music.

The backing tracks, alone, are dynamite. Lifted by the bass and drums of the legendary sessioneers Family Man (Aston Barrett) and his brother Carlton, they combine subtle interplay of



Lorna Bennett: first female reggae chart-topper after Millie in 1964



Bob Marley & The Wailers in Jamaica, 1972: (l-r) Earl Lindo, Bob Marley, Carlton Barrett, Peter Tosh, Aston 'Family Man' Barrett

a fantastically high order with a slow, powerful swing which is quite irresistible.

Two of the tracks are very, very long, and Marley sways as he “conducts” the percussionists through an over-dubbing take. When the music’s playing, he becomes a different person – at one with his art and totally in control.

To date, only one track has been given a vocal. That’s a shorter song called “Catch A Fire”, and its excellence almost defies coherent comment.

Marley is a brilliant arranger of voices (viz, “Put It On”). His lead vocal, high and grainy, comes swooping out of the choruses in the most unexpected yet totally right places – truly he’s a virtuoso, on a par with the very finest soul singers, and if he could do nothing else, he’d still become a singer of world stature.

“Catch A Fire” is better than his previous output

(which includes “Stir It Up” and other songs for Johnny Nash). The words are gripping, carrying a message with an emphasis all the better for its calm delivery and lack of rhetoric:

“Every time I hear the cocka-crowin’, my blood run cold/I remember on the slave ship, how they brutalised our very souls/Slave driver, the table is turned/Catch a-fire, so you can get burned.”

Knowing his capabilities, the rest of the album will be just as good. That being so, its impact will be enormous – particularly among the blacks of North America. Marley is especially important to Blackwell for another reason. Bob has always worked with black producers and record companies, and has been disappointed. Now he’s

trying a white man – and Blackwell has given him an advance with which to make the album, contrary to local practice and against the advice of many people. It’s a test case – as much for Marley as for Chris, and if it

succeeds, both will benefit. Marley is respected among Rasta musicians and many more of them will want to work with Island. There’s no doubt that musically the project is working.

Leaving the studio, Blackwell and companions smile at each other, speechless with pleasure at what they’ve heard. They know, as everyone surely will, that Morgan’s pirate treasure, sunk somewhere off Port Maria, is not Jamaica’s only hidden wealth. The music, too, is golden. 🗿

CATCH A FIRE

RELEASED 13 APRIL 1973

In which The Wailers, with the help of Chris Blackwell, reconfigure reggae for a worldwide audience. Stir it up! BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

WHEN a penniless Bob Marley found himself stranded in London in early 1972 without the air fare back to Jamaica, he paid a visit to Chris Blackwell at his office at Island Records in St Peter's Square and asked for a loan. However, Blackwell had a better idea. "I'd distributed some of The Wailers' early records and I was impressed with their charisma and sense of power," Blackwell recalled in an interview with *Uncut* in 2001. "I offered Bob a deal there and then. It wasn't that I paid their air fare home. I asked him how much it would cost to make an album. He named his price and I drew him a cheque on the spot."

Most considered it a reckless move. "Everybody said I was crazy, that these were bad, unreliable guys who would rip me off and I'd never get my money back or see them again," Blackwell told *Uncut*. "But I backed a hunch that it wouldn't turn out like that."

It was some hunch. The price Marley had named was just £4,000. In return for this modest investment, Blackwell got *Catch A Fire* and the developing world's first authentic global superstar.

It is hard to understate how strongly reggae was despised by the *bien pensant* rock fraternity in 1972.

To your average long-haired hippy with a pile of albums by King Crimson, Jethro Tull and the Incredible String Band under their arm, reggae was music for skinheads who'd kick you in the head; a simplistic novelty characterised by a handful of pop hits with risqué but puerile lyrics such as Max Romeo's "Wet Dream" and Judge Dread's "Big Six".

The film *The Harder They Come* and its accompanying soundtrack had shown that perhaps there might be more substance to reggae than previously had been recognised, and Blackwell's initial plan had been to turn Jimmy Cliff, the film's star, into a black rock icon "as big as Jimi Hendrix". His template was not so much Cliff himself but rather his on-screen character, based on a real-life ghetto gangster named Rhygin whose life had ended in a hail of bullets after he'd killed three policemen in self-defence during the colonial era.

But Blackwell's plans to market Cliff as an outlaw/rebel/street poet were scuppered when Cliff walked out on Island. "I was really upset about losing Jimmy as I thought I'd figured out how to make Jamaican music huge," Blackwell said. "Then by chance Bob was around. I was excited because the first time I saw him I thought he was the living embodiment of the character Jimmy had just played in *The Harder They Come*."

To understand the true brilliance of Blackwell's crossover strategy to sell Jamaican reggae to a white rock audience, you need to listen to the two-disc ➤



**CATCH A FIRE GAVE
THE DEVELOPING
WORLD ITS FIRST
AUTHENTIC GLOBAL
SUPERSTAR**

deluxe edition of *Catch A Fire*, released in 2001, and compare and contrast the two different versions of the same album that it contains. One disc presents the familiar album released by Island in 1973; the other consists of the original and previously unheard diamonds-in-the-rough tracks and mixes recorded by Marley and The Wailers with Blackwell's £4,000 in a range of Kingston studios including Harry J's, Randy's and Byron Lee's Dynamic Sound.

With Marley, Tosh and Livingston supported by The Upsetters' rhythm section of Aston 'Family Man' Barrett on bass and Carlton 'Carly' Barrett on drums, and with Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths on backing vocals, the 11 tracks – including "High Tide Or Low Tide" and "All Day All Night", which were omitted from the final album – are earthy, raw and extraordinary. They were recorded with the tastes of a Jamaican domestic audience in mind, and some roots reggae fans have expressed a preference for the directness and simplicity of the basic tracks to the smoother caress of the remixed and overdubbed album that was eventually released.

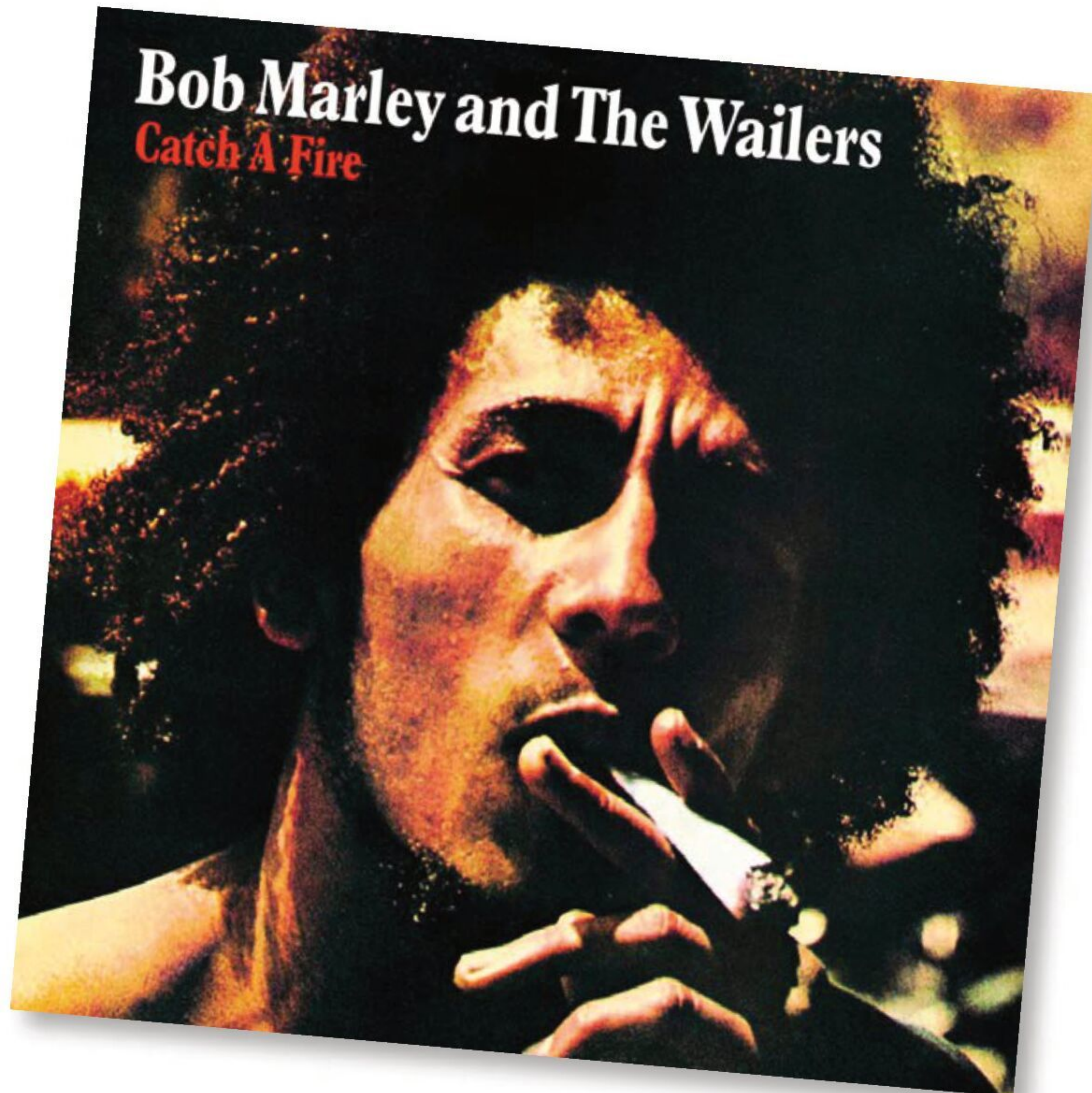
When Blackwell attended a session at Harry J's in September 1972 and witnessed the recording of "Slave Driver", he expressed "sheer elation" at what he heard. "It was like something coming through exactly as you'd dreamed it could be," he recalled. "The music was fantastic but there was something more than that – there was simply the fact that it had been done when many people had doubted it."

When Marley flew in to London some weeks later with the rest of the eight-track master tapes, Blackwell described them as "incredible". But he knew that if he was going to make a crossover LP he could sell to an Anglo-American rock audience, something more was needed. He suggested that they rework the tracks at Island's own studio in a converted chapel in Notting Hill. There he overdubbed rock guitars and keyboards and deployed filters, flange, shimmering reverb and other studio tricks of the time to overhaul the songs and give them "more of a drifting, hypnotic-type feel than a reggae rhythm".

Over the years it has sometimes been suggested that Marley was a reluctant participant in this overhaul, and his biographer Stephen Davis claimed that many hardcore Jamaican fans were dismayed by the 'sweetening' process and felt he had "sold out to a Babylonian music cartel". Yet there is no evidence that Marley had any sympathy for this view. The Wailers had spent a decade scoring plenty of Jamaican hits, but had been systematically ripped off by every producer they had worked with and had made no money. When Blackwell offered the chance to find a potentially lucrative new audience

CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is the music of the people. Genuine ghetto music and not the tarted up pastiche of get-rich-quick record companies. Though the overall feel is laidback, it has an intensity which reveals the flair of all five musicians." **ROY CARR, NME, MAY 5, 1973**



by putting Marley's songs through a rock blender, he gratefully embraced the opportunity. He attended some, if not all, of the overdubbing sessions and was credited as co-producer.

Blackwell brought in two key American rock musicians who were contracted to Island on other projects. John 'Rabbit' Bundrick, who had played with Free and knew about reggae from touring with Johnny Nash, contributed synth, clavinet, organ and electric piano overdubs. The rock guitar tropes came from Muscle Shoals sessioner Wayne Perkins, a good ol' boy from Alabama who had never heard, let alone played, reggae before. When he met Marley for the first time in the studio, he told him blankly that he couldn't understand a word of his Jamaican patois. The language barrier was overcome by bonding over several large spliffs.

Marley's original Jamaican mixes were lean and taut with a stark clarity, leaving plenty of space for embellishment. Blackwell filled in the gaps with unerring judgement: he not only made the sound more accessible to ears attuned to rock'n'roll, but did so in a way that actually enhanced rather than compromised the album's rebel spirit and its Jamaican character. Even Bunny Livingston – no fan of Blackwell and the Babylonian ways of the rock industry – conceded the point.

"What we did was lay down a hard-driving rhythm that suggests the basic reggae principles," he said.

"And then we put little bits of colouring in here and there that wouldn't take away from basic principles, but would attract the international marketplace."

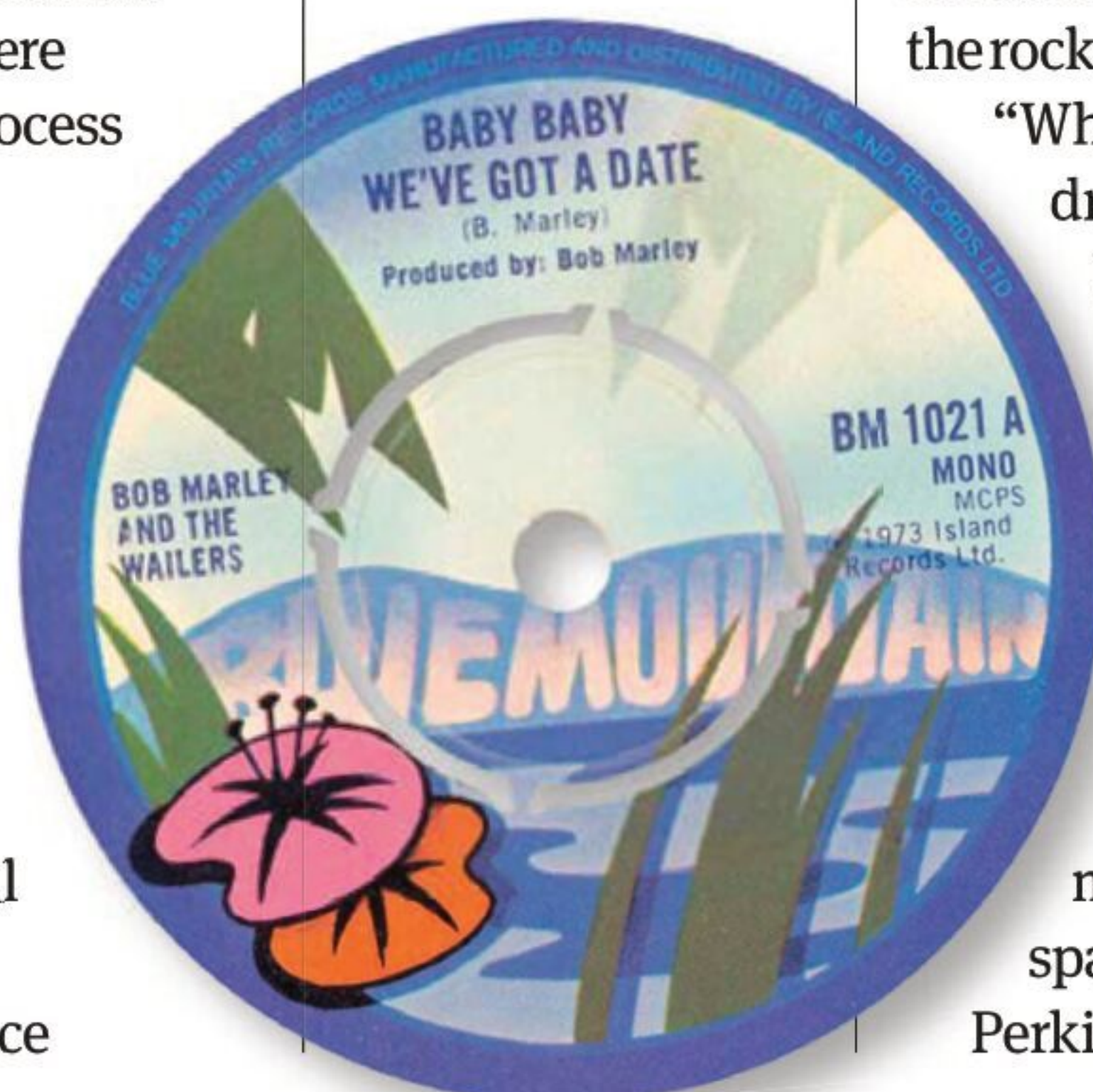
The opener, "Concrete Jungle", is the most radical example of the makeover. It starts with an echoing space-rock guitar motif played by Perkins, but which might have been

lifted from a Pink Floyd record, and 32 seconds elapse before the Jamaican beat is finally introduced and Marley's cool voice intones, "No sun will shine in my day today." How better to sell reggae to sceptical rock fans than to pretend that it isn't really reggae at all? Carlton Barrett's trademark one-drop rhythm is then fleshed out with additional percussion and a rocking Robbie Shakespeare bass part, and a song of ghetto suffering is translated into a universal cry of urban alienation.

"Slave Driver" lent the LP its title ("Catch a fire so you can get burned") as, over an irresistible rhythmic tug, Marley sings one of his most militant lyrics about brutalised souls chained in poverty. Perhaps it was the power of the lyric that led Blackwell to leave the original Jamaican recording almost untouched. It's followed by Tosh's "400 Years", which picks up the same themes of slavery and liberation and was first recorded in 1970 on the Lee 'Scratch' Perry-produced *Soul Rebels*. Here it's taken at a slower tempo, soulfully sung by Tosh with Bundrick's cosmic-sounding clavinet let loose in the middle eight. It meant the LP launched with a triptych of politically charged songs and yells of rebel anguish, driving home the message that reggae can no longer be dismissed as novelty froth, but is capable of some seriously heavy lifting.

"Stop That Train" is another Tosh song first recorded with Leslie Kong in 1969 and taken at a languid pace with a gospel flavour, enhanced by Bundrick's Hammond and a sanctified echo placed on Tosh's beseeching voice, backed by a rich patchwork of hymn-like harmonies.

When he wasn't fighting for the ghetto's dispossessed, Marley excelled as a lover-poet, and a trinity of sensuous songs follow, like a Jamaican evocation of the spirit of Marvin Gaye's *Let's Get It On*, perfectly sequenced as each raises the amorous heat. "Baby We've Got A Date (Rock It Baby)" is



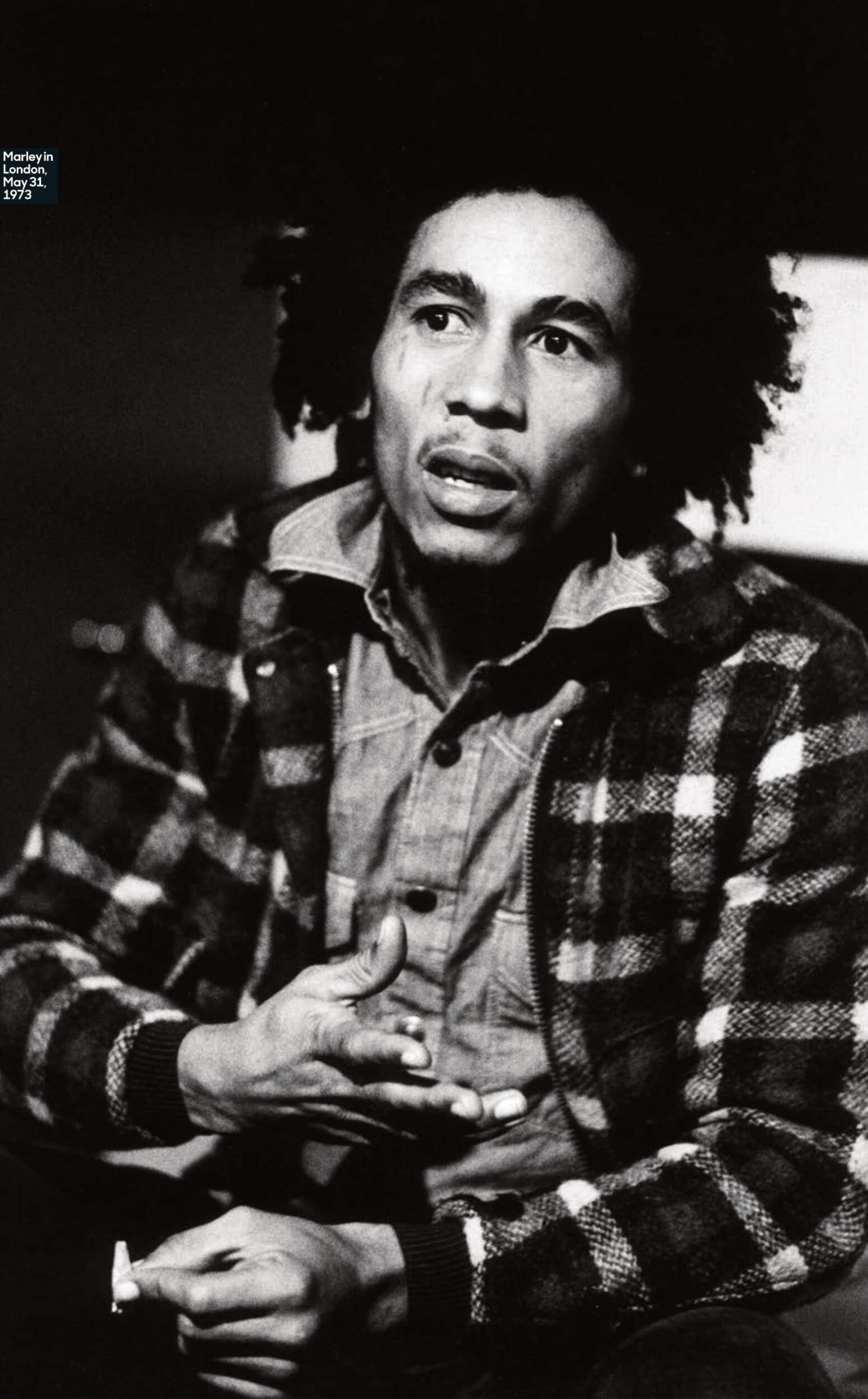
gently romantic with some lovely steel guitar from Perkins. “Stir It Up” – already a hit for Johnny Nash – boasts some understated wah-wah and is more suggestively carnal (“*Your recipe darling is so tasty and you sure can stir your pot*”) before the funky “Kinky Reggae” boils over as Marley salivates over Miss Brown with “*brown sugar all over ‘er booga-wooga*”.

Then it’s back to more righteous sentiments on “No More Trouble”, the most stripped-down track from the original Jamaican mixes, with a hauntingly impassioned vocal from Marley and one of the finest examples of Carly Barrett’s one-drop drumming style, but dramatically retooled by Blackwell with an insistent minor key electric piano motif. The album ends on a spooked, what-the-fuck note with the echoing “Midnight Ravers”, a visionary “*musical stampede*” of 10,000 horseless chariots, in which Book Of Revelation prophecy and Rastafarian augury come together in what may just have been the most apocalyptic conclusion to an album since “A Day In The Life”.

Marketed in a strikingly elaborate Zippo lighter flip-up sleeve (due to the high hand-assembly costs, it was replaced after the initial pressing with a portrait of Marley toking on a conical spliff), *Catch A Fire* was not only the first reggae album designed specifically to appeal to rock fans, but also the first reggae album to be conceived as a cohesive statement with a consistent mood and atmosphere in a genre that had, previously, only dealt in singles and shoddily assembled comps. The original sleeve notes further emphasised reggae’s newfound universalisation by noting that Marley’s songs “echo the wailings of the ghetto not only in Jamaica but indeed in any ‘concrete jungle’ anywhere”. The more astute critics immediately recognised that *Catch A Fire* had changed the trajectory of reggae and hailed a landmark in black music to rank alongside Stevie Wonder’s *Talking Book* and Marvin Gaye’s *What’s Going On*. “A whole new style of Jamaican music has come into being,” Linton Kwesi Johnson told *Race Today*. “It has a different character, a different sound. It incorporates elements from pop music internationally – rock and soul, blues and funk... a clear-cut attempt to incorporate the modern electronic sounds of metropolitan music.”

Two weeks after the LP’s release, Marley and the Wailers recorded a session for John Peel’s *Top Gear* and made their British TV debut on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, performing “Concrete Jungle” and “Stir It Up”, a pivotal statement that announced the arrival of reggae as a legitimate part of the cartography of grown-up, alternative rock music. Mainstream commercial success was not instant, though. *Catch A Fire* failed to make any impression on the UK charts and reached a lowly No 171 in the US. Still, Babylon’s submission was now only a matter of time. 🗿

Marley in London, May 31, 1973



TRACKMARKSCATCH A FIRE

1 Concrete Jungle ★★★★★	★★★★★	Sound Studios, Harry J Studios and Randy's Studios, Kingston; Island Studios, London Personnel includes: Bob Marley (guitar, vocals), Peter Tosh (organ, guitar, piano, vocals), Bunny Wailer (bongos, conga, vocals), Aston Barrett (bass), Carlton Barrett (drums), Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths (backing vocals), John 'Rabbit' Bundrick (keyboards, synthesiser, clavinet), Wayne Perkins (guitar), Robbie Shakespeare (bass) Highest chart position: UK – , US 171
2 Slave Driver ★★★★★	8 No More Trouble ★★★★★	
3 400 Years ★★★★★	9 Midnight Ravers ★★★★★	
4 Stop That Train ★★★★★		
5 Baby We've Got A Date (Rock It Baby) ★★★★★	Label: Island	
6 Stir It Up ★★★★★	Produced by: Chris Blackwell and Bob Marley	
7 Kinky Reggae	Recorded at: Dynamic	

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES





"I get high, but I don't like sitting around too much"

A nascent superstar reveals his complex past and uncompromising work ethic to **RICHARD WILLIAMS**, as the Marley legend starts to take shape. Then, Williams finds the Wailers in London, sharing studio space with The Rolling Stones and living on fish and chips. And **MICHAEL WATTS** catches a “rather stiff” live set in New York, warming up Max’s Kansas City for one Bruce Springsteen.



Melody Maker
24/2/1973

BOB MARLEY, slightly built and quiet to the point of diffidence, is a leader. He's the master of reggae, the man who's about to give it that big shove out of its normal cultural confinement and into the rest of the world. The consequences of this action may be drastic for the health of the music. It could be the making of reggae, or could sap its vitality beyond repair. But that won't affect Marley, because for the past seven years he's been making the best music to be heard in Jamaica, and his potential is limitless.

He and his group, the Wailers, have an album called *Catch A Fire* out here next week, on Island's Blue Mountain label. It seems to me that this may be the most important reggae record ever made – its equivalent of Sly's *Dance To The Music*, or Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*.

It has that kind of potential: revitalising the style from which it springs, and introducing it to an entirely new audience. A few years will need to have passed before we'll know for sure, but Marley may even be a genius. Like many great musicians, he's a different man inside the recording studio. The shyness is stripped away, and he becomes totally at one with the music, controlling it and swaying in sympathy with the extraordinary rhythm patterns he draws from his bassist, Aston "Family Man" Barrett, and his drummer, Family Man's brother, Carlton.

Marley's musical assurance comes from a considerable depth of experience. At 28, he's been burned and hassled as badly as most of his Jamaican contemporaries, but unlike a lot of them he's putting the knowledge he's gained to good use.

He can see why and how he got burned, and he's going to make sure it doesn't happen again. What's happened to him already, though, gives him just as much right to sing the blues as Robert Johnson ever had.

HE WAS BORN in Kingston, Jamaica, the son of a white British Army captain from Liverpool – "I only remember seeing him twice, when I was small" – and a black Jamaican who wrote spirituals and sang in the local Apostolic Church.

Unlike most half-castes, who violently take one side or another, it's given him an unusually open view of race: "I don't really check people's colour," he says.

Bob sang in church, too, but he didn't care for it.

"I preferred dancing music. I listened to Ricky Nelson. Elvis, Fats Domino... that kind of thing was popular with Jamaican kids in the '50s. The only English-speaking radio station we heard was from Miami, but we got a lot of Latin stations, mostly from Cuba, before and after Castro."

He began to learn welding as a trade.

"But I loved to sing, so I thought I might as well take the chance. Welding was too hard! So I went down to Leslie Kong at Beverley's Records in '64, and made a record on a single-track machine. Jimmy Cliff took me there – he was Beverley's number one man."

The record was called "One Cup Of Coffee",



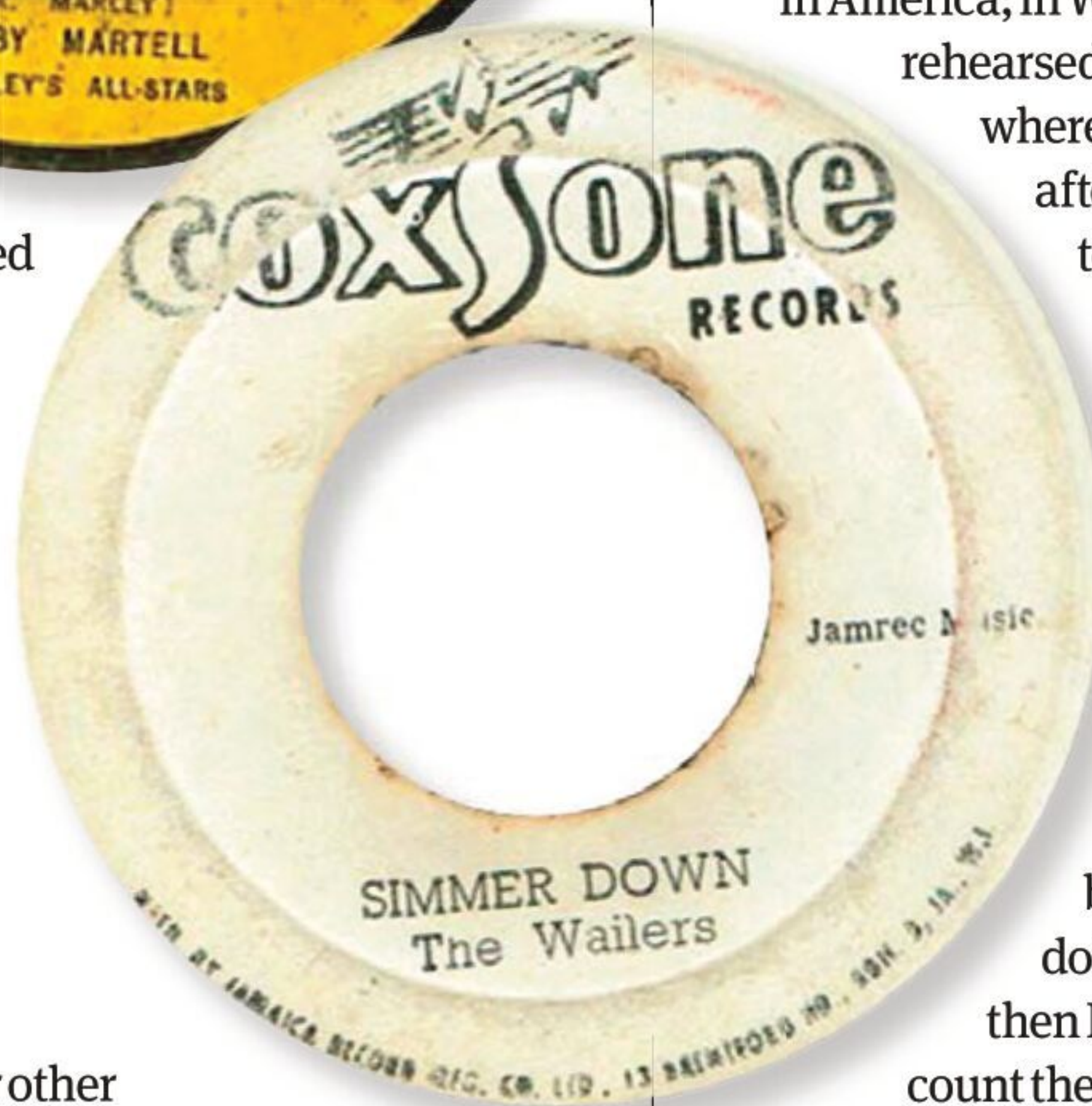
and the world ignored it. But Marley, undaunted, went back to the woodshed. "My greatest influence at the time was The Drifters – 'Magic Moment', 'Please Stay', those things. So I figured I should get a group together."

He assembled four other kids: Peter Mackintosh (vocals, piano, organ, guitar) and Bunny Livingstone (vocals, congas, congos), who're still with him today, plus a boy named Junior and a girl, Beverley Kelso. He wrote a song called "Simmer Down". They rehearsed it, and went to see producer Coxson Dodd, who liked and recorded it, putting it out on his Coxson label.

"It went off like a bullet," says Bob. "But they didn't tell me how much to sell... that's supposed to be the private business of the producer. I don't remember how much I was paid for 'Simmer Down', because when they give you money, they don't tell you what it's for."

"After we left Coxson in '69, we got no more royalties – and the songs we did for him are selling ever since. We made 30 or 40 records for him, and most of them sold good."

Among them was the brilliant "Put It On", a shimmering ska classic which surfaced in Britain on Island in 1966, and the gorgeous "Sunday Morning" (on a par with the best of Curtis Mayfield), the B-side to "Love Won't Be Mine" in



the same year. If you look hard, you can probably still find them on the second-hand stalls – and if you do, you'll be congratulating yourself forever.

"We weren't making enough money to share between five, so two of the group left. Junior went to live in America, and Beverley... well, she was kinda slow-like. She didn't have good timing."

After they left Coxson Dodd, Bob and his mother left Jamaica for a while.

"It was hard in Kingston, so we went to live in America, in Wilmington, Delaware. I

rehearsed by myself in our basement, where it was nice and quiet, but after a few months I went back to Jamaica, and I thought I might as well continue with the Wailers."

He got Peter and Bunny back together, and they decided to form their own record label.

"That's a big move, in Jamaica. Prince Buster was the first to start the revolution by leaving the producers and doing it himself. Then myself, then Lee Perry... and you can't count the rest."

"It's better to know for yourself if your record is a flop, than have someone else tell you. And if your record sells good, the producer pretends he's gone to Nassau when you come by the office. In Jamaica, you're expected to use your knife, or your machete, or your gun."

That first label was called Wailin' Soul, but it got off to a bad start when Bunny was jailed for almost a year on a ganja rap – and those who've seen *The Harder They Come* may understand the Machiavellian implications of a frame-up behind that.

At that point, around '68, American singer Johnny Nash and his manager, Danny Simms, came on the scene. They were looking for talent, saw Bob singing on Jamaican TV, and signed him up.

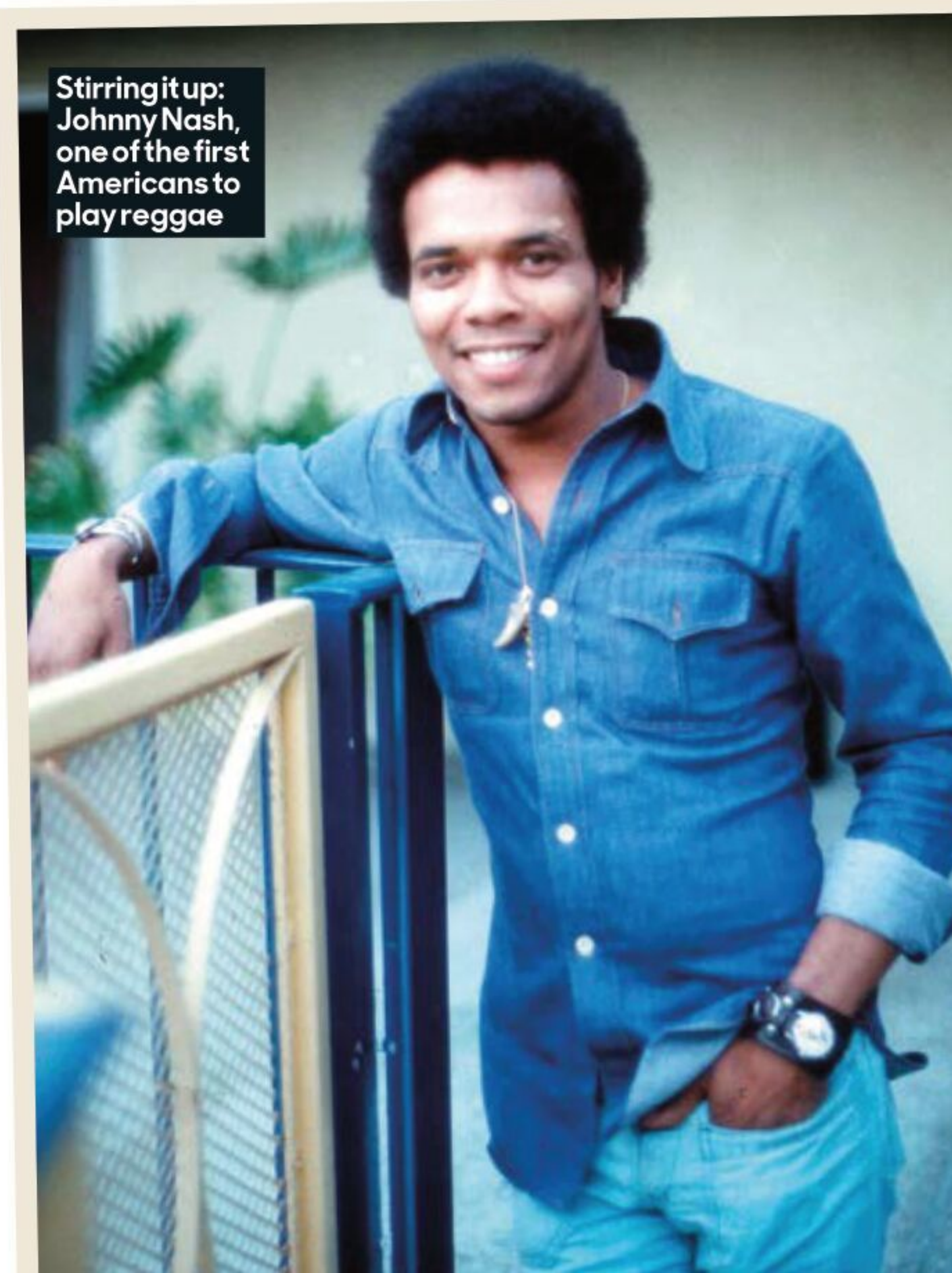
Bob recorded an album for their JAD label, but from it only one single – "Bend Down Low" – ever saw the light of day, in the States. However they took Bob's song "Stir It Up", recorded already by the Wailers on Coxson, and turned it into a worldwide smash for Nash, who also used other Marley songs ("Guava Jelly", "Belly Rub") on his *I Can See Clearly Now* album.

They even took Marley to Sweden for three months, to help write the music for a film starring Nash which has yet to be released, and over in England they got a single by him out on CBS – "Reggae On Broadway", with which he's far from satisfied, because Nash had too much influence on the production.

"He's a hard worker, but he didn't know my music. I don't want to put him down, but reggae isn't really his bag."

"We knew of Johnny Nash in Jamaica before he arrived, but we didn't love him that much. We appreciated him singing the kind of music he does – he was the first American artist to do reggae – but he isn't really our idol. That's Otis or James Brown or Pickett, the people who work it more hard."

Going to Sweden did Bob's business no good:





“When I came back, it was all mash (ruined). I’m the only one who takes a real interest in it. Jamaica’s a place where you sit around and get high. I’m not gonna do that. I get high, but I don’t like sitting around too much.”

So on his return, in 1970, he started a new label, Tuff Gong, and also a record shop, the Soul Shack, on King Street in Kingston. The shop is mostly devoted to selling records by the Wailers and Rita And The Soulettes. Rita Marley is known as Bob’s wife, but they aren’t actually married – it was just an idea to get some publicity for one of her records. They stock the old Wailers records on Coxsone, their six 45s on Wailin’ Soul, and the dozen-or-so they’ve released on Tuff Gong, including their biggest hit to date – the fantastic “Trenchtown Rock”, which sold about 25,000 and was Jamaica’s No 1 for three weeks around Christmas 1971, and the recent mind-destroying “Satisfy My Soul (Jah Jah)”.

The problem for a small label is getting airplay: “You have to be big friends with the radio disc-jockeys, take them out and treat them like family. They make up the radio station charts, and people only buy what’s in the charts.”

Bob is not unduly optimistic about the business side of the Jamaican music scene. “We’ve hurt the big guys by starting our own labels, because all they’ve got left is the studios and the pressing-plants. But the business will only change when younger guys appear, who’ll deal fairly with the artists. The older guys will never get better.”

It was Island’s Chris Blackwell who gave Bob the chance to use a lot of time and a fair amount of

money to make the *Catch A Fire* album. Advances to Jamaican artists are unknown – but Blackwell saw the potential in Marley, and the two men tacitly decided to trust each other. The result is the first example of Marley’s music which hasn’t been hampered by absurdly low budgets.

The album has several quite long tracks, maybe the first extended reggae songs, but Bob says: “They’re always like that in the studio, and then they get cut down to three minutes or something.

“IN JAMAICA YOU’RE EXPECTED TO USE YOUR GUN”

BOB MARLEY

Jamaica is a place where the musicians are restricted, going into the studio and just playing the same old thing because they’re afraid that anything different might not sell.

“What we need here is people who’re not concerned with holding the artists down. But I don’t think it’ll happen for a long time.”

Make no mistake about it – Marley is potentially a giant figure. *RICHARD WILLIAMS*



THE ROLLING STONES are upstairs in Studio 1, where they’ve been for the past five weeks. Jagger strolls around the foyer, looking for something to do, all neat in white blouson jacket and fawn velvet jeans. But that, you may be surprised to hear, is not where the real action is at this night in Island Studios, Notting Hill.

Not, at any rate, if you’re a Wailers fan. On this occasion, even the Stones’ long-delayed newbie comes second to Bob Marley and his brothers from the shanty towns of Kingston, Jamaica.

The Wailers have been in Britain for some weeks now, playing various kinds of gigs, and generally doing very well. There have been problems – Bunny Livingston never wanted to come in the first place. He’s happy being poor in Jamaica, he says, and he’d rather not witness the fleshy delights of a European metropolis. The temptation might be too great. Nevertheless, he’s here.

There’s a problem, too, with food. Being Rastafarians, they don’t eat meat at all, or fish with scales. So cartons of vegetables and plaice have been delivered most days to their communal house on the Kings Road, and on the road they’ve eaten mostly out of fish’n’chip shops.

“Huh,” says Bunny, stuffing most of a battered plaice-and-six into his face, “London’s national dish.” No salt, though – that’s also forbidden by the Rasta creed.

In general, they’re delighted with the response ➤

they've received over here. Only one thing puzzles Marley: when they've played at black clubs, the audiences don't applaud. But the white college audiences have applauded each number loudly.

"Before they came here," confides an Island person, "they'd never heard of doing encores. So the first night, when they left the stage and the audience carried on cheering, they thought maybe something was wrong. We had to persuade them it was actually good, and push them back onstage."

Tonight, anyway, the Wailers are in Studio 2, the smaller one, working on their follow-up to the brilliant *Catch A Fire* album. They laid the rhythm tracks down at Harry J's studio in Kingston, as is their custom, and have already overdubbed voice parts plus extra guitars and keyboards.

Island boss Chris Blackwell is back from a millionaire-style excursion down the Colorado River, on a 20-foot rubber raft, to supervise the mixing process. He picked up the Wailers for Island in the first place, and is closely involved in their success for various reasons. It's he who decided that *Catch A Fire* should be packaged as if it were a major rock album, and projected at a whole new market.

Amusingly enough, someone is showing round the original copies of two 1966 Wailers records, "Put It On" and "He Who Feels It Knows It", which came out here on Island. It's ironical, as they were to all intents and purposes, "pirate" records. Bunny sniffs when he sees them, and goes into a rant on the iniquities of the Jamaican record scene.

The session starts with a quick run-through of the rough mixes, which Blackwell is hearing for the first time. As the eight or nine songs glide by, his expression remains on the brighter side of contentment. The raw material is – how shall we put it? – magnificent.

The mixing proper begins with a Marley song called "I Shot The Sheriff", a sort of humorous musical version of the plot from *The Harder They Come* (which you should have seen by now, or heaven help you). Marley's role as lead singer is similar to that of the outlaw character, Ivan, played by Jimmy Cliff in the movie. The high falsetto chorus, delivered by uncharacteristically strained voices, adds to the comic quality.

However, it's the music that carries this track. Listening to Blackwell and his engineer bringing separate instrument tracks up and down, hearing either the bass or the drums in isolation, one begins to grasp the mastery of these men. There are, for example, two rhythm guitars here, chopping through and around each other as if by telepathy. Beneath them runs the suavest, lithest, most inventive bassline, courtesy of Aston "Family Man" Barrett, meshing in perfect sympathy with his brother Charlie's drumming.

Ah, the drumming. Had you noticed that these guys play the bass-drum on two and four, the off-beats? Maybe you remember the fuss when Jo Jones transferred the beat-carrying role from the bass-drum to the hi-hat with Count Basie's band in the '30s. Isn't there just a chance that what the reggae drummers are doing is equally revolutionary, and might have a similar effect? If that were all they did, it would be noteworthy enough, but when the musicologists start taking this stuff seriously (in, say, 10 years' time), they're going to find enough material for years of research and analysis.

It's a bit early in the session to get involved with a masterpiece, but that's what comes up next.

Whatever you thought was the best track on *Catch A Fire*, its equivalent on the new album will be a thing called "Duppy Conqueror". The song will be familiar to most stone reggae fans because Bob wrote and cut it a couple of years ago.

The song is reminiscent of both "Put It On" and "Stir It Up" in that it's built on the familiar "La Bamba" pyramid chord changes, and it resembles "Stir It Up" most of all because the rhythm is a swaying slow-medium.

Mostly it's call-and-response between Bob and the other voices, his nasal asides and interjections growing out of the chorus. "*Yes me friend (me good friend) they say we free again/The bars could not hold me (whoo-hoo)/Force could not control me now/They try to put me down, but Jah put I around now/I been accused (whoo hoo) and wrongly abused now.*"

The engineer silences all the tracks except the voices, and suddenly the truly sublime quality of the Wailers' harmonies is brought home with a vengeance.

Have they ever recorded anything a cappella, without instruments? No, says Peter Tosh. You should, says Blackwell. They should indeed.

Music like this is Bob Marley's forte; soft, supremely sensual, and making its point through understatement. It doesn't shout at you, rather it insinuates, suffusing the brain like a heady wine.

MAKE NO MISTAKE – MARLEY IS POTENTIALLY A GIANT FIGURE

Unfortunately, some otherwise intelligent people have missed the point, and expect him to come on like Toots Hibbert or Desmond Dekker, shouting and bashing. That attitude is so patronising as to be beneath contempt. Does Wilson Pickett invalidate Smokey Robinson? Of course not.

At this point, Jagger walks in. "You've met Bob?" says Blackwell. "Uh... hi," says Mick, extending a hand.

The album the Stones are mixing was, of course, recorded in Jamaica, where Jagger met many reggae musicians until, he says, he got a bit bored with it. He must be getting pretty bored with his own album, too: it's months since they began it, although he maintains that only seven weeks' hard work have been put in so far.

Jagger has come to enlist Blackwell's aid. It seems that Keith Richard's old lady, Anita, has been staying in Kingston with a Rasta band which Keith plans to produce. Their house was raided, Anita was busted, and she can't get bail. Blackwell, being rich and of Jamaican descent, might have some pull.

"I don't really have any," he says, and asks Tosh: "What are the police like with Rastas now? Are they specially hard on them?"

"Depends," Tosh replies. "Depends on the Rasta, and depends on if he knows the right policeman."

The Wailers live on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, 1973



"Duppy Conqueror" goes round and round, played at least two dozen times, and it could go on for ever. Nobody here would mind. Make a 40-minute tape-loop of it, someone suggests, and there's your album.

But, of course, there are other songs. "Get Up, Stand Up", "Reincarnated Soul" (out on the B-side of the new single, "Concrete Jungle"), the fabulous "Rastafarian Chant", Bunny's "Oppressor Song", and a beauty from Marley called "Burnin' And Lootin'", with another incredible lyric: "*Give me the food and let me grow/Let the roots-man take a blow now?/All them drugs gon' make you slow now/Its not the music of the ghetto...*"

The "roots-man" is the man who boils plant roots, distilling a drinkable substance of allegedly spiritual properties. It also makes you high.

Nothing one hears suggests that this will be anything less than a worthy successor to the last album, and in "Duppy Conqueror" it will contain a true classic.

RICHARD WILLIAMS



MELODY MAKER
11/8/1973

I'd like to say the Wailers were a fantastic success at the opening set at Max's, but this wouldn't be strictly accurate; not because they weren't good, simply that reggae has not yet achieved any real momentum in America.

Generally, *The Harder They Come* has not made much impact in the States, and neither

has its star, Jimmy Cliff. It's been the reggae-orientation of Johnny Nash and the dabblings of such as Paul Simon and J Geils that have registered Jamaican music, but only to the point where the public thinks of it as a novelty. Thus, although the Wailers arrived fresh from an apparently triumphant residency in Boston, they found themselves playing to largely unconverted ears at Max's and, with virtually no exception, white ears. To compound matters, most of the audience was there for Columbia's new rising star, Bruce Springsteen, while the seated policy of the club was

hardly conducive to a natural, bodily response to what's essentially dance music.

This is not to make too many apologies, however, for the Wailers, who were rather stiff for most of their set. In fact, Bob Marley sounded somewhat thin and unconvincing on lead vocals. In all truth, they didn't appear to be enjoying themselves, and this reserve held back their music, which if anything relies heavily on its infectiousness.

There aren't many of us who aren't West Indians that have been exposed much to live reggae, so it's difficult to place the Wailers in a critical context. But, although it may be a little unfair to use them as a test case for a whole musical culture, they've made a lot of friends and alienated no-one. It's a start.

Bruce Springsteen has not only started, he's fully emerged within the space of four months. His first LP resembled the manic outpourings of an autistic child, but there's never any doubt in my mind that he's an original talent. Those who've dismissed him have simply never seen him. He and his band – with more than a passing reference to giant black

tenorist Clarence Clemons – are the most voluble and exciting club act to have appeared this year. Springsteen, with his half-smiling, befuddled air, still sounds like he's spent time in a mental institution, but that impression only heightens the desperate, tumbled intensity of his performance. He plays spirited guitar on uptempo numbers, but he's more effective on piano, where he employs his more reflective songs (there was an especially involving one about growing up in Asbury Park, NJ). His lyrics are invariably oblique – hardly narrative – and he'd benefit only by not straining after effect and crowding image upon image. As an artist he still hasn't defined himself, but when he's learned to discipline the neurotic impulse that forces him into a kind of absurd speed writing, without losing his fierce compulsiveness, he'll have something major to say. As it is, he's an arresting talent who expresses himself best live, where this jarring note is passed over in the physicality of the music. He's a lot of fun, too. 

MICHAEL WATTS

ALANMESSER/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

BURNIN'

RELEASED 19 OCTOBER 1973

The original triumvirate's last stand. A masterpiece emerges, rapidly, amid harrowing tours and wave after wave of hype.

BY NEIL SPENCER

NO sooner had *Catch A Fire* seen its UK release in December 1972 than Island Records called for a second album. *Catch A Fire* wasn't even out in the States and, by the time it surfaced there in April 1973, the Wailers had already finished recording its successor.

Conjuring up an album at such short notice left the group unfazed. The treasure chest of songs from their Coxson and Scratch years was only now filtering into western ears, and, as on *Fire*, could be plundered for gems. Songs poured from Bob Marley seemingly without effort, while Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh could be expected to contribute material old and new.

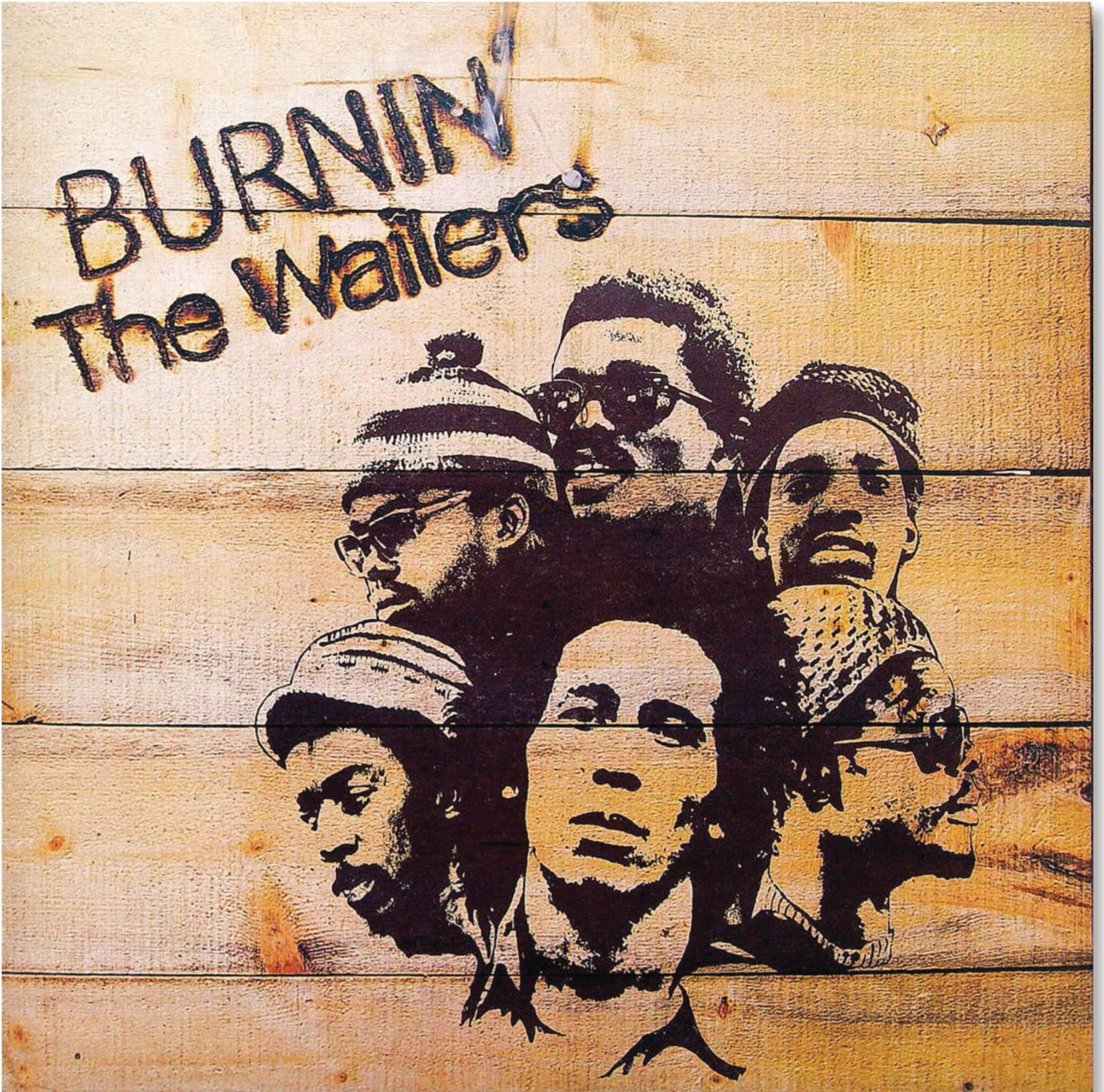
After rehearsals at 56 Hope Road, recording the songs at Harry J's, the smartest studio uptown, was a relatively straightforward affair. This was, after all, a group of studio veterans who had been making hit records since they were teenagers, their number now supplemented by Earl 'Wire' Lindo, an accomplished keyboard player who brought a fuller, funkier flavour to the Wailers' sound.

With a new album in the bag, the group were free to build on the media accolades that had greeted its predecessor. It was time to tour, which would prove way more problematic than making records. Such reggae bands as there were existed to play North Coast

hotels or, like expats The Cimarons, to provide backing for star vocalists like Jimmy Cliff and Ken Boothe. A self-contained group that wrote, played and sang its own material and toured it – a rock commonplace – was unknown in Jamaica. The island's musical economy, built on hit singles, radio and sound systems, didn't work that way.

For the Wailers, the tours of 1973 would be a baptism of fire, as they found themselves plunged into an often uncomprehending music industry. In London in May, they were fêted, capturing the Speakeasy, hangout to the capital's rockocracy, for four consecutive nights, appearing on BBC TV's *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and Radio One's *Top Gear*, hoovering up the interest of a music media that sensed something big. At the dirty end of the stick came dull hours cooped up in a minibus ploughing Britain's motorways – sample gigs: North Staffs Poly, Bristol's Boobs club – setting up equipment themselves, sometimes for meagre crowds. Even finding food that accorded with their Ital Rasta diet was problematic.

A few weeks of this was enough for Bunny Wailer, who on returning home from the UK tranche of the *Catch A Fire* tour vowed he would never go on the road again. He hated the idea that he was just "jukeboxing yourself" and resented the "freak clubs" in which he was asked to play. With their North American debut in doubt, the group recruited in Bunny's place Joe ➤



***BURNIN'* WOULD
PROVE A VITAL STEP
FORWARDS IN THE
EVOLUTION OF
MARLEY'S MUSIC**

Higgs, the man who had taught the trio vocal harmonies back in their fledgling years in Trench Town, and who now moved from mentor to Wailer. A five-night residency at a Boston jazz club, Paul's Mall, eased the band into four nights at New York's hippest club, Max's Kansas City, where they opened for Bruce Springsteen, then in his 'new Dylan' phase. It was the hottest ticket in town. The Wailers were not selling many records, but they had arrived.

A different strategy was devised for the *Burnin'* tour, which started in the US with the band opening for Sly And The Family Stone, whose fan demographic stretched from black ghettos to post-Woodstock hippiedom. Good in theory, the move proved disastrous, with the band unceremoniously dumped after four shows. The audiences were confused – some were expecting the 1960s surf band of the same name, others struggled with the languorous rhythms and rootsical attitudes. Sly didn't dig them either, perhaps sensing a rival in Marley. The Wailers continued the tour in their own right, their schedule erratic.

RELEASED on the eve of their US tour, *Burnin'* would prove a vital step forwards in the evolution of Marley's music and an elegant swansong for the original triumvirate of Bob, Tosh and Bunny. Unlike *Fire*'s clever but cryptic cover, it came cleanly packaged, its cover image showing a group of six musicians with Marley at their centre, its inner sleeve giving all six equal profiles, its centre spread studded with photographs (by Bob's girlfriend Esther Anderson) that showed a hinterland of Rasta livity, a world of beach shacks, dreadlocked children and sno-cone spliffs.

Burnin' was, inevitably, a less startling album than *Fire*, but it had a character of its own, its militant cuts balanced by devotional anthems rather than love songs – there was no kinky reggae here. Further, it contained a trio of songs that would become central to the Marley mythos: "I Shot The Sheriff", "Get Up, Stand Up", and "Burning And Looting". With all three on Side One, *Burnin'* was always going to be a remarkable record.

"Sheriff" remains a glorious oddity in the Marley canon, a Marty Robbins-like wild west tale delivered reggae style. Westerns had always been enormously popular in Jamaica – lawless gunmen on the streets heading for a shoot-out was an everyday fact of life in Kingston – their appeal reflected by tunes like The Skatalites' "Ringo" (which the Wailers had covered) and Scratch Perry's "Return Of Django".

CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is a heavily committed album, both politically and religiously, reflecting what a lot of us had maybe overlooked – that Marley is an angry young man with a mission."

STEVE LAKE,
MELODY
MAKER,
OCTOBER 20,
1973

The hero of Marley's song is no outlaw, but a man victimised by Sheriff John Brown – "Every time I plant a seed he say kill it before it grow", a sentiment usually interpreted as a reference to growing ganja but later described by Esther Anderson as reflecting Bob's attitude to female contraception, with 'sheriff' substituting for 'doctor'.

With its galloping narrative, catchy chorus and swirls of Billy Preston-style organ, "Sheriff" was a classy piece of pop, albeit needlessly speeded up on *Burnin'*. As much was proved when the song was covered by Eric Clapton the following year, delivering Clapton his greatest hit and Marley a fresh burst of fame.

"Burning And Looting" was much more what fans of *Catch A Fire* were expecting, Like "Concrete Jungle" and "Slave Driver", it groans under the weight of oppression, its opening verse evoking curfews, imprisonment and "faces dressed in uniforms of brutality", its sense of suffocation reflected in the slow-burn rhythm spelt out by Lindo's clavinet – the instrument would subsequently become ubiquitous in reggae. To match his subject, Marley pulled out a vocal performance of shamanic power. Rooted in personal experience – both Tosh and Marley had recently had run-ins with the JA police – the song's themes were universal; in 1973 "uniforms of brutality" were in full operation across the globe, from Chile and Argentina to South Africa and Siberia. Challenged that he was inciting violence, Marley pointed out the chorus was "burning all pollution", though many preferred to take his words literally.

In contrast comes "Get Up, Stand Up", whose joyous, air-punching chorus was surely an evolution of James Brown hits like "Say It Loud" and "Get On The Good Foot", and which would provide a frequent live finale for both Marley and its

co-creator, Peter Tosh. The song's call to "stand up for your rights" may scream political resistance, but its verses are pure theology, railing against the false preaching of the church and its promise of heaven tomorrow, asserting that "Almighty God is a living man" (meaning Ras Tafari, Hailie Selassie). It remains a three-minute capsule of Rasta concentrate.

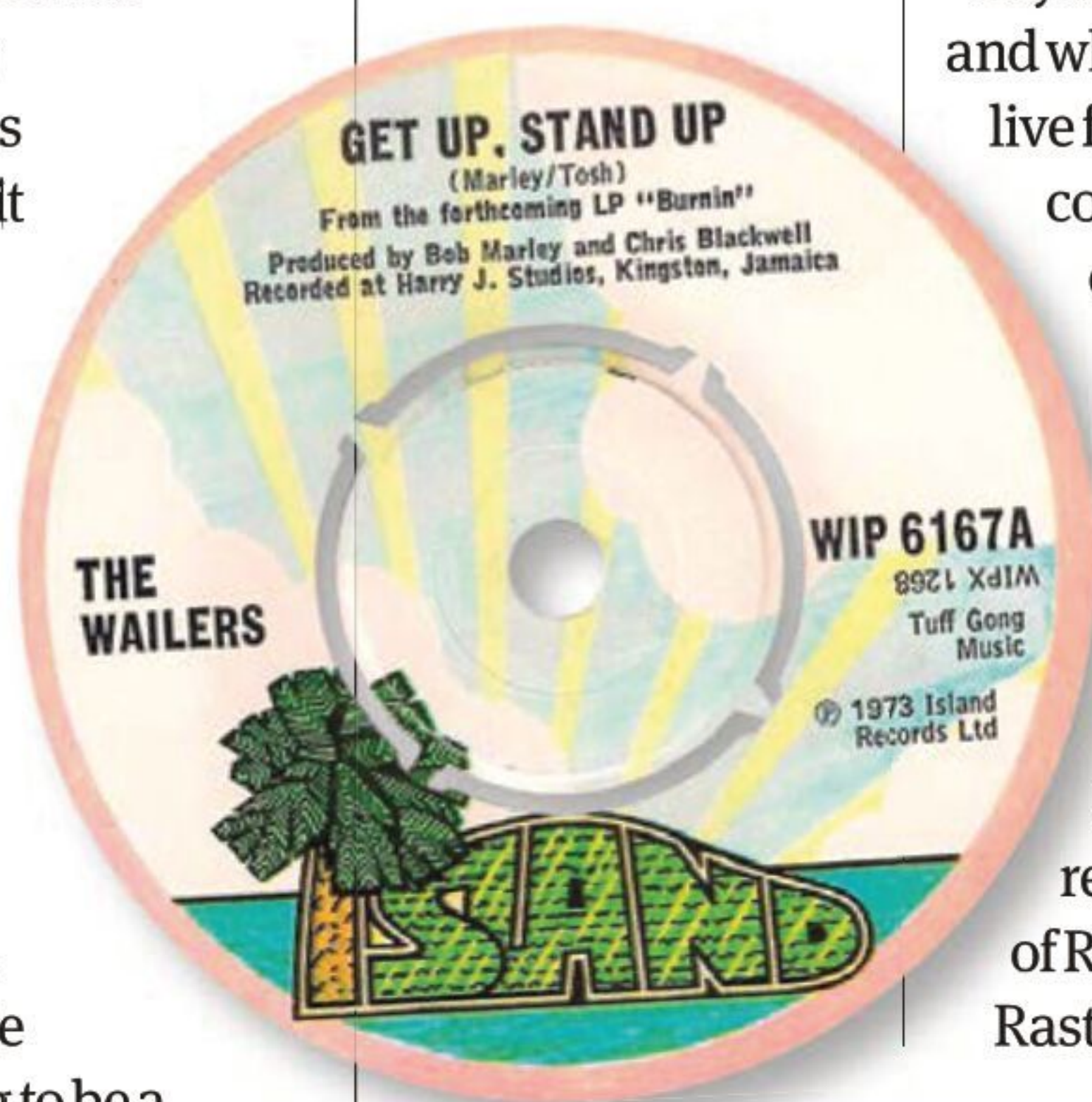
Rasta revelation permeates *Burnin'*

through an altogether different trio of songs from Bunny. The album's initial title was 'Reincarnated Souls', after a Bunny tune that ended up as the flip side of the "Catch A Fire" 45, though its melody and sentiments (basic Buddhism, presumably not Bunny's intention) are as interesting as "Pass It On" or "Hallelujah Time" here. "Hallelujah Time" had already seen service on Bunny's own Solomonic label in 1972 on a version with a jazz-swing feel. Here its benign, pastoral mood is kept minimal for Bunny's delicate lead vocal, straight from early Curtis Mayfield. The "sheep scattered on the mountains" have an entirely biblical source – among the tropical forests of the Blue Mountains, sheep are thin on the ground. In word and melody, "Pass It On" might have come from Jamaican Sunday school. It's an awkward number, not helped by the clumsy piety of lines like "Be not selfish in your doings", but its chorus is uplifting, borne on the Wailers' fêted vocal harmonies.

On tour, the group had taken to opening with the acoustic "Rastaman Chant", whose nyahbingi drums and imprecations to the downfall of Babylon come from the hillside and backyard gatherings of the Rasta faithful, though its promise that "one bright morning when my work is over I'll fly away home" would be familiar to any bluegrass fan. We remain in Bible country.

The three 'makeovers' from the group's past are well chosen. "Small Axe" and "Duppy Conqueror" may lack the edginess of the Perry-produced originals, but the versions here are immaculate in their own way, their winding melodies, windswept harmonies and vinegary lyrics as inviting as ever, especially if, like most of those coming to *Burnin'*, you had not encountered them before. They provide great backstory, as does "Put It On", a big hit when it appeared back in '65 on Coxsone's Studio One label, though its ska surge is muted here.

Peter Tosh barely features on *Burnin'*. Aside from "Get Up, Stand Up" he



BURNIN' WAS LESS STARTLING THAN FIRE, BUT HAD ITS OWN CHARACTER



The Wailers in London, 1973: (l-r) Peter Tosh, Aston 'Family Man' Barrett, Bob Marley, Earl 'Wire' Lindo, Carlton 'Carly' Barrett and Neville 'Bunny' Livingston

contributes only “One Foundation”, a plod by the standards set elsewhere on the album, whose lyrical flights never get further than its much repeated platitude “*Got to build our love on one foundation.*” Unlike Bunny, who had retreated to live among the Rasta encampment at Bull Bay, Tosh remained an active member of the Wailers, a key component of the group’s collective energy and image; tall, dangerous Peter Tosh, toughest of the tough.

But Tosh was vexed. For 10 years, the Wailers had been an indestructible trinity; the three members had each other’s backs through success, rip-off, persecution, false hope and musical glory. Now they were poised on the brink of international stardom, relations turned sour. Tosh mistrusted Island and resented the label’s increasing focus on Marley as the group’s star. Tensions didn’t stop there. The Barrett brothers felt patronised as mere session men rather than integral members of the group whose success, not least live, surely owed much to their bedrock rhythms.

Things came to a head halfway through the British Burnin’ tour. Again the group found themselves in the pressure cooker of a mini-bus, only this time in the first bitter embrace of a British winter. Tosh was ill, carrying a doctor’s sick note and unable to sing. En route from Leeds to Northampton he erupted in a bilious verbal tirade. When it began to snow – not uncommon in late November England – Tosh took it as a sign from Jah that he should quit.

The rest of the tour was cancelled – the Island press office explained it with a simple “It snowed” – and the group

beat a retreat to Jamaica, Tosh to set about a solo career, Marley and Family Man to consider how to take their work forwards. The triumvirate of the original Wailers had sundered – pop groups habitually split up when their members are in their late twenties – but their fellowship did not dissolve. Bob, Bunny and Peter remained inexorably entwined in spirit. The bad blood subsided. The trio rejoined onstage in March 1975, headlining a show at Kingston’s National Stadium also starring The Jackson Five. They stopped playing around 4am. 🕒

TRACKMARKS BURNIN’

- 1 **Get Up, Stand Up** ★★★★★
- 2 **Hallelujah Time** ★★★★★
- 3 **I Shot The Sheriff** ★★★★★
- 4 **Burnin’ And Lootin’** ★★★★★

- 5 **Put It On** ★★★
- 6 **Small Axe** ★★★★★
- 7 **Pass It On** ★★★
- 8 **Duppy Conqueror** ★★★★★
- 9 **One Foundation** ★★
- 10 **Rastaman Chant** ★★★

Label: Island
Produced by: Chris Blackwell, the Wailers
Recorded at: Harry J’s, Kingston; Island Studios London
Personnel: Bob Marley (guitar, vocals), Bunny

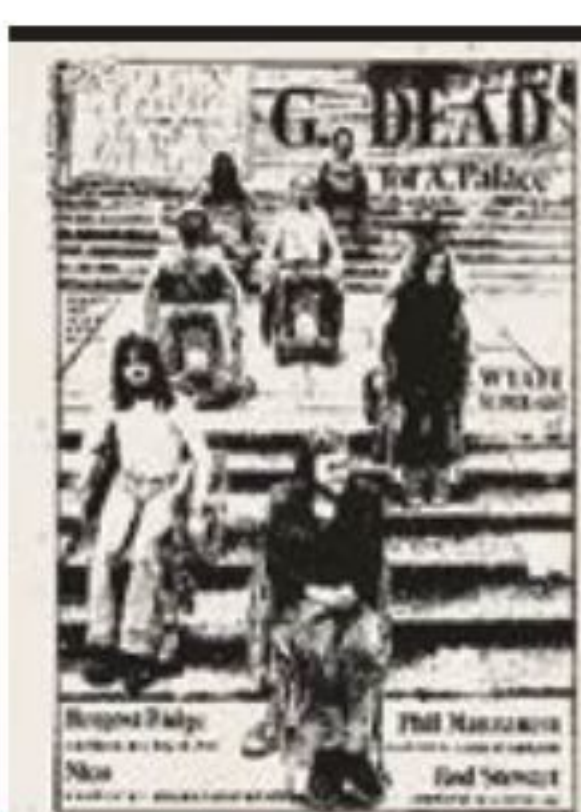
Wailer, Peter Tosh (guitar, vocals), Aston Barrett (bass guitar), Carlton Barret (drums), Earl 'Wire' Lindo (keyboards)
Highest chart position: UK – , US 151

“I don’t see how you can leave your roots”

With Eric Clapton’s version of “I Shot The Sheriff” going up the charts, has Bob Marley – on the verge of releasing his third album for Island Records – lost some of his original power? “We only experiment,” he says, as he explains his political context and belief system to **NEIL SPENCER**. “It’s never wise to limit yourself.”



Bob lays back for
his hotel room
interview, 1974



NME
24/8/1974

BOB MARLEY'S hair is something else again.

Like some latter-day Gorgon's head, it bursts outward in a black electric storm and falls in a maze of ringlets. It is, he tells you, "Natty Dread", and it gets that way when you ignore it completely and let nature take its course.

Natty Dread is also the title of the new Wailers album, set for release here in September, though in this case the words refer to more than just a hairstyle:

"It's a new expression in Jamaica," says Marley, "for them youth who don't care what the people say and who have a natty 'ead (he scratches vigorously to make his point). It means something breeds."

And, what's breeding in Jamaica right now, he'll tell you, are the three R's of Reggae, Revolution and Rastafarianism, all of which lie close to Marley's heart.

As purveyors of the first, The Wailers probably have no equal, while the second and third form the basis for much of Marley's material – songs like "Concrete Jungle" and "Small Axe" that smoulder with the flame of urban disillusion and anger.

Certainly The Wailers' two albums for Island – *Catch A Fire* and *Burnin'* – have combined vision, technical expertise, and sheer musicianship to an unprecedented degree in reggae (Jimmy Cliff aside), breaking completely with the primitive production standards usually associated with the music and marking The Wailers as the most radical and innovative force in Jamaican music today.

Back beyond them stretches an impressive record for Marley as a veteran of the island's music scene.

At present, Marley's over here to mix the tracks for *Natty Dread* and add final embellishments: "It's a little different to the others," he says of the new album. "Different but the same reggae... we have some girl singers – the I-Threes – on this one, and maybe we put on some horns too."

His slight figure reclines leisurely, nay stonedly, in a large comfortable chair while he gestures loosely with his hands, one of which grips a half-smoked but still impressively proportioned sno-cone. In contrast to the semi-slumped repose, the words tumble out swiftly, in a thick gravy of

Jamaican patois that often defies understanding. Words and phrases contract and expand in the telling, and the man's deep-rooted humour periodically rises into an amused chuckle.

At times, the going is, frankly, tough.

TOPICAL QUESTION first: what did Marley think of Eric Clapton's version of "I Shot The Sheriff", the original of which is on *Burnin'*.

A broad smile slides across his face:

"GRREEyat, mon."

All the same, I venture, I miss the vocal work on the original – those high Impressions-style harmonies that are a trademark of The Wailers.

"Well, after we cut '...Sheriff', I think they speed it up on the machine – you can hear it in the chanting – 'cos the pace we did the recording is not the pace on the record. Some machines speed it up y'know... but I think Clapton got the right speed, not too slow, not too fast."

If nothing else, the big C's version at least proves that reggae can make the Top 20 in this post-skinhead era, while Island have promoted The Wailers' albums heavily in the white market.

What about the view that Marley, in taking reggae into more sophisticated realms, was

losing the "ethnic feel", the proverbial roots...

"Anything can happen with music, we only experiment. It's never wise to limit yourself... Them people think I should do the same this year as last; maybe them people don't like it, but new people like it. You can't stay in one place. But I don't see how you can leave your roots suh – as long as you write a song and play it, it must be roots."

Hmmm... Dylan could have used a line like that back in '65.

So where did he get the idea for "...Sheriff"?

"On the beach. Plenty things were happening in Kingston, police things. I want to say 'I shot the police' but the government would have made a fuss so I said I shot the sheriff instead... but it's the same idea; justice, mon, justice."

Shoot the police? To fully understand The Wailers' songs you have first to familiarise yourself with the often ferocious backdrop of 1970s Jamaica. Listen to songs like "Screwface Underground" by The Maytals or "Burnin' And Lootin'" by The Wailers and you begin to get the picture from lines about soldiers, curfews, and riots – betcha never saw that in the travel ads for the 'Island in the sun'.

The situation is pretty bad then, huh?

"The situation in Jamaica is the same really – good for some people but it don't change for most. The government fears an uprising, so they use them strategy on the youth – guns and police, curfews and roadblocks."

Jamaica, he'll tell you, "is just a big backyard" where plenty of people have to lie low from the constant interest of the police, who, he asserts, still work for the Queen.

Mention of independence brings forth hearty laughter:

"That's only an advertisement, they tell the people a big lie. England still has a strong hold, the government still works for the Queen, y'know. Nothing has really changed."

But didn't the present prime minister, Michael Manley, gain power after a number of reggae groups, including The Wailers, had supported him on his election tour?

"Yeah, he had a big festival, everybody was there. But it's still politics... we were there too, though; that was the first time we have really toured all of Jamaica. But what we sing about is in opposition to them, we were like the opposition on stage, that's why we did it."

Unlike the mouthings of most white rock groups who make revolutionary noises, Marley's commitments to opposing the current state of affairs are not to be dismissed lightly. He lives a Rasta lifestyle, ("anywhere the police don't find me") and his music stems directly from his everyday experiences.

He goes on to describe the pattern of repression; the periodic curfews, for example, when the soldiers shut off a block of houses while they search for guns. Was there going to be an armed revolution then?

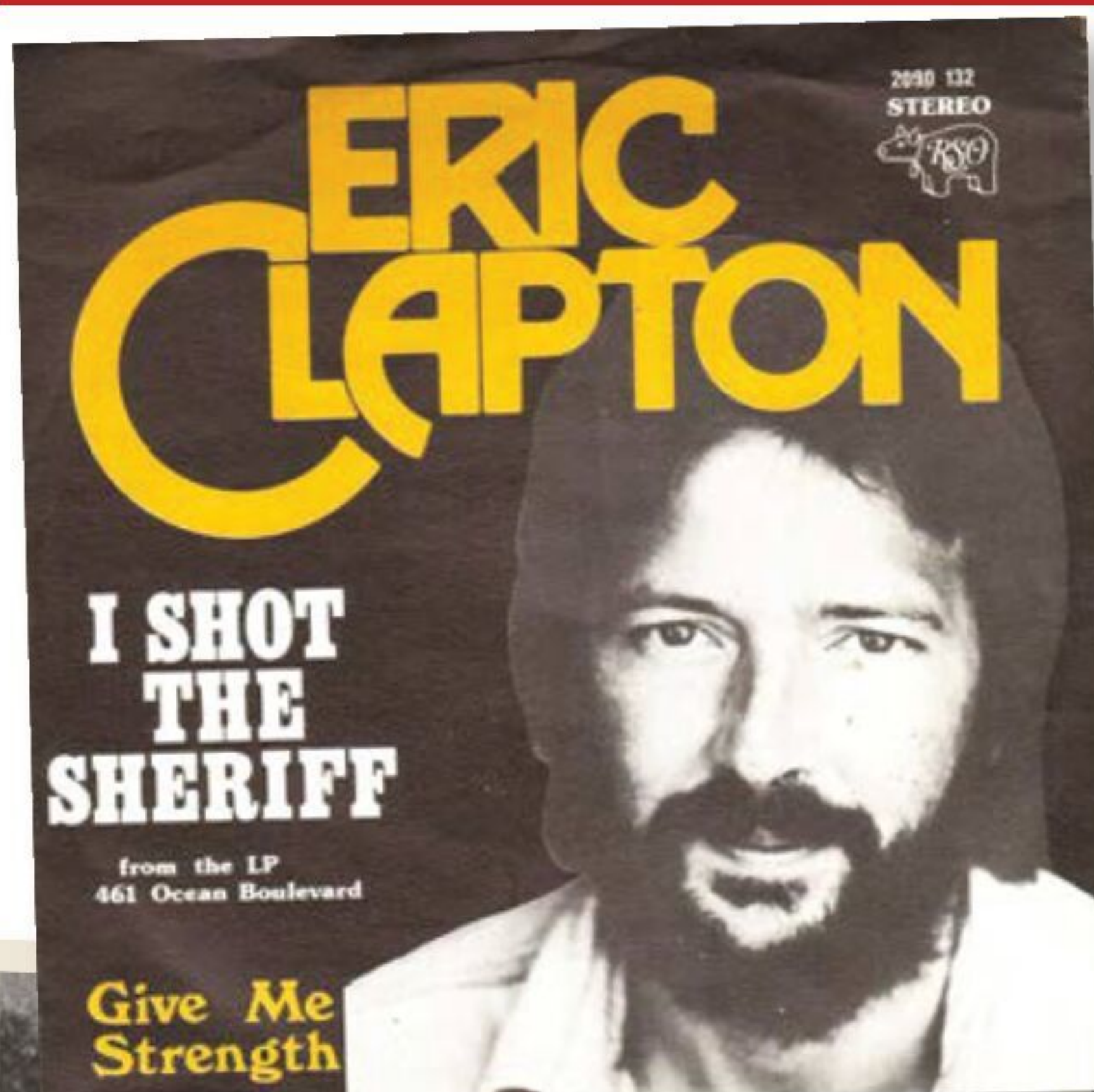
"Well mon, there's a revolution going on right now, but not one like with an army. It's snipers, snipers through the night."

Sounds more like Belfast all the time... but not everyone goes round toting a gun after dark, surely?

"No mon, when the yout' get together we don't get angry, we just get together and laugh at them fatty man. We're not gonna fight and shoot 'em, we let

"CLAPTON GOT THE RIGHT SPEED FOR '...SHERIFF'"

BOB MARLEY



"We get together and laugh at them fatty men"

Marley (left) and percussionist Alvin "Seeco" Patterson (right) chat with friends after playing soccer in Trench Town, Kingston, 1974



'em keep searching for guns and things and we live how we want, we believe in love.

"But we don't really plan anything, we just let it happen. I really don't want to be no killer, but in the West there will be plenty happen before we go back to Africa, which is the most important thing."

"Back to Africa" has been a central theme in various black ideologies ever since Marcus Garvey spread the word around in the 1920s. It's a keystone of Rastafarianism, a confusing, and some would say confused, religio/revolutionary doctrine that likens the black man's estrangement from Africa, via slavery, to the plight of the tribes of Israel cast out in Babylon.

This much you might have gathered from the Biblical references of songs like Desmond Dekker's "Israelites" and The Melodians' "Rivers Of Babylon".

To complicate things further, the Rastas also take Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia as a kind of Godhead, and.... hell, they believe all kinds of things, which, as an intrepid reporter (and a doomed Westerner to boot), it seems one's duty to discover.

Take Haile Selassie for instance:

"His Imperial majesty is Rastafari, head creator, the Lion of Judah that your Bible tell you about; 'The Lion of Judah shall break every chain.' You ask if he is God, but anybody can be God, anybody. Let's say he's an example to human beings."

But on a more earthly level, wasn't he currently in danger of being ousted from power by the military?

"Even in Zion there shall be wars and rumours of wars," quotes Marley fondly. "The military can't take his power away, they can only take material power, not spiritual power."

"But people must know him, and know him well; they mustn't just take him for granted."

At this, Aston "Family Man" Barrett, who's been sitting the whole time in almost complete immobility, watching the proceedings from laconically hooded eyes, is moved to affirm the remark with a slow nod of his head. You'd never think that this was the same guy who pumped

out those incredible bass rhythms.

But to continue... could Bob Marley give any more ideas about what Rastafarianism is, and what it might mean for the rest of us?

"Well, it's plenty things," he continued. "It's not a preachin' thing, you just have to believe it. I can't really tell you, I just do the best thing for myself – me can't save me brother, you can only save yourself."

"But the Bible say 'Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess', and all governments shall kneel to his Imperial Majesty. The world shall stand still, as it says in Revelation, and the West shall perish."

Why believe what the Bible says, rather than any other book?

"What the Bible say will happen, it may take a long time but it will happen. When I read the Bible I see what I want in it, I maybe see it differently to you. These things are beyond my explanation... we know these things but we don't know how they will happen."

So there you have it – Flee From The Wrath To Come – a message that's illustrated musically on tracks like "Midnight Ravers" from *Catch A Fire*, which creates just the right sort of atmosphere for the horsemen of the apocalypse to come galloping out of the stereo speakers.

But like Rastafarianism, with its strong belief in love and helping your fellow man, The Wailers' music is not all anger and bloodletting. There are positives too; eulogies to love and sex like "Stir It Up", and pastel-shaded vocal chants like "Hallelujah Time".

From the little I heard, the new album promises to be their finest yet, full of the same loping, writhing rhythms, and with the I-Threes giving more bite to the vocals.

Earl "Wire" Wilberforce has meanwhile been replaced on keyboards by Tyrone Downie, though whether this will be the lineup that plays The



Wailers' planned British gigs in September is not yet certain.

The material on *Natty Dread* remains as

uncompromising as ever, with a tracklisting

including "Natty Dread",

"Them Belly Full", "I Rebel Music",

"Talking Blues Again", "Revolution", "Bend Down Low", "Lively Up Yourself", "I'm A Due", and "I Love Music". Most are Marley originals, though Carlton Barrett (Aston's brother) also contributes.

In the same way that both other Island albums have reworked one or two old Wailers numbers previously issued on Tuff Gong in Jamaica (Marley's own label), so the new one does the same for "Bend Down Low" ("That's for a girl, to tell her you love her," chuckled Marley) and "Lively Up Yourself" ("a day off from the revolution").

Of the rest, Marley describes the title track as a call for "the people to get your culture"; "Talking Blues Again" is about "government madness", and "Revolution"... well, the words speak for themselves.

*"It takes a revolution to make a solution
Too much confusion demand frustration
So my friend you will see
Like a bird in the tree
A man must be free...
Never let a politician grant you a favour
He will want to control you forever
So if it's fire, let it burn
If it's blood, let it run."*

Positively Blakean sentiments... and with its acceptance of anarchy, its Biblical overtones, its pantheism, and its belief in brotherly love, Blake is perhaps the nearest we can get to Rastafarianism. But whether you can go along with all the ideology or not, don't miss the music; it's among the best around. 

NATTY DREAD

RELEASED OCTOBER 1974

Going it alone, Marley navigates a path between universal salves and righteous Armageddon. "Everything's going to be all right"?

BY DAVID CAVANAGH

DURING the 1974 recording sessions in Miami for Eric Clapton's album *461 Ocean Boulevard*, George Terry, a guitarist in his band, brought a copy of *Burnin'* by The Wailers to the studio. "Play along," he coaxed a sceptical Clapton. "Get into the groove." Out of some uncertain jamming emerged Clapton's reggae-rock cover of "I Shot The Sheriff", released as a single by his record company that summer. Soon the tale of Sheriff John Brown and his deputy was being heard on every radio from Miami to Montana, and by September it had climbed all the way to No 1 on the *Billboard* charts. A Bob Marley song was the top-selling record in America.

It was sweet vindication in every sense, not least because Marley faced an uphill struggle to get his music played on the radio at home. Let the people sing his praises abroad; the 'dirty Rasta' remained a prophet without honour on the airwaves of Radio Jamaica (RJR) and the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC). In what proved a year of transition and internal review, Marley spent almost the whole of 1974 out of the public eye, playing no concerts outside Jamaica. The Wailers had scattered to the four winds – Bunny was out, Tosh had burned all his bridges and Earl 'Wire' Lindo

(keyboards) had left for San Francisco – leaving Marley, a general without much of an army, to pick up the pieces with the Barrett brothers. Stoically they rehearsed and recorded a new album, *Natty Dread*, with Marley doing all the songwriting and singing all the lead vocals. Looked at one way, he was embarking on a solo career. Looked at another, he was assuming custodianship of the Wailers' name, identity and reputation. Either way, he was marching towards the destiny predicted for him by Jimmy Cliff, Johnny Nash, Danny Sims, Chris Blackwell and others since the mid-'60s. The new name of the band was Bob Marley & The Wailers, but only one man's face was on the posters.

It might have been on the ill-starred British tour of November '73, or possibly on an overnight flight to London, or possibly just prior to that, before he left Kingston, but at some point Marley had started strumming a few country-style chords on a guitar and singing some words inspired by a recent conversation with an old friend named Tartar. The two of them had been reminiscing about growing up in the slum dwellings of west Kingston. "*I remember when we used to sit,*" the song's first line went, "*in a government yard in Trench Town.*" Tartar, a genial soul, had run open house for the local youngsters in those days; his makeshift soup kitchen had been a prime hangout for the teenage Wailers, and Marley had often slept on ➤



**NATTY DREAD
WAS MARLEY
CONTEMPLATING
HIS FUTURE AND
HIS PAST**

his floor. As the British-Jamaican author Colin Grant notes in his book *I & I: The Natural Mystics – Marley, Tosh & Wailer*, the government yards, while extremely poor, were actually a step up from tenement yards, where the worst deprivation was to be found. Even so, the government yards were still a ‘brutalising’ environment in which to raise a child. With memories like that, no wonder Marley’s lyrics for “No Woman, No Cry” sound emotionally complex. There’s a vivid line about cooking a bowl of cornmeal porridge, but also one about “*observing the hypocrites*”. There’s even a touch of “Auld Lang Syne” in the way Marley’s and Tartar’s thoughts turn to “*good friends we have lost along the way*”. Jimmy Cliff described Marley to Lloyd Bradley in his book *Bass Culture* as a “happy, optimistic” person, but “No Woman, No Cry” has shadows under its skin as well as hope in its heart. Not even the perennial confusion about its title – Marley is telling his woman not to cry; he’s not saying that women are the cause of tears – has prevented its central message from speaking an international language understood by millions. *No matter how bad things look*, the most famous reggae song of all time tells us, *everything’s going to be all right*. One can’t quite imagine Peter Tosh writing it.

Attempting to get around the terms of a publishing contract that he’d signed in 1972 and begun to resent, Marley gave the songwriter’s credit for “No Woman, No Cry” to Tartar (under his real name of Vincent Ford), who, facing life in a wheelchair after losing his legs to diabetes, appreciated the kudos and the money that it brought. Marley did the same with other songs on *Natty Dread*, dispensing shares in future royalties to loyal friends and musical brothers. “So Jah Seh” was credited to an unlikely alliance of Rita Marley – who, according to biographers, spent much of 1974 building a house at Jamaica’s Bull Bay and preparing to give birth to her fifth child – and the pseudonymous Willy Francisco, alias Alvin ‘Seeco’ Patterson, a Cuban in his forties who would join the reconstituted Wailers as their on-the-road percussionist. Some compositions, however, Marley couldn’t avoid putting his own name to. “Bend Down Low”, the album’s oldest song, had been the first single ever released by the Wailers’ Wail’N Soul’M label at the end of 1966. It was the year that Bob and Rita had got married. *Natty Dread*, as the lyrics of “No Woman, No Cry” made clear, was Marley contemplating his future and his past. He’d come so far; he had so far to go. “He was more freer,” the veteran reggae journalist and musician Carl Gayle once pointed out. “The album didn’t have to be

CRITICS’ VERDICT

“Bob Marley returns with what may well prove yet another fruitless attempt to move grassroots reggae into a wider market. Marley’s quality has never been in doubt, but the general public seems determined to bypass the genuine reggae in favour of the more diluted approach.”
STEVE LAKE, MELODY MAKER, FEBRUARY 15, 1975

“This confirms Bob Marley’s place among the canon of truly innovative and challenging voices in black music. Bland or inconclusive it isn’t. The smouldering ghetto anger still glows.”
NEIL SPENCER, NME, FEBRUARY 1, 1975

split into threes. So what him do, he look back ‘pon him life.”

Recorded at Harry J’s Studio in Kingston, with overdubbing and mixing done later in London, *Natty Dread* is a remarkable statement of unity considering there was no group as such to unite behind. Marley, like Eric Clapton in Miami, worked largely with session players, some of whom were listed in the musicians’ credits and some of whom weren’t. It’s a tribute to Aston and Carlton Barrett that *Natty Dread* sounds like a mid-career highlight made by a dynamite band that has achieved symbiosis. A reviewer in *Let It Rock* magazine, likening the music’s tightness to the best rhythm sections in funk and soul, made an astute comparison to “recent singles by the Fatback Band, Hamilton Bohannon [and] George McCrae”. With Blackwell taking charge of the London sessions, *Natty Dread* was never in danger of aiming itself at reggae elitists.

A MID-CAREER HIGHLIGHT MADE BY A DYNAMITE BAND

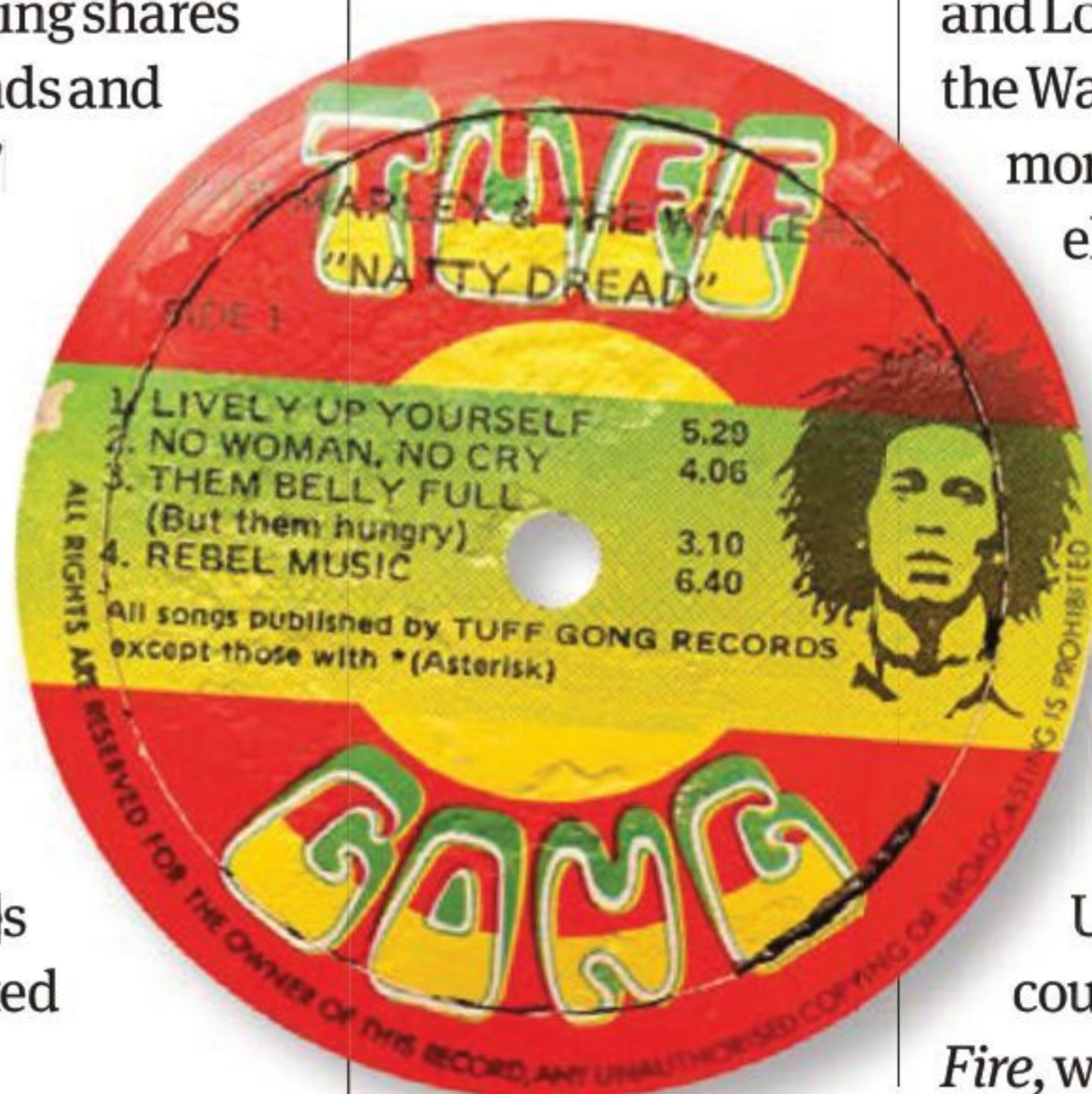
Between the postcodes of Kingston 11 and London W11, a new incarnation of the Wailers gradually loomed into view, a more outward-looking one that would electrify audiences all over the world.

Its lead guitarist would be an American – Al Anderson, from New Jersey – who happened to be in London, hanging around on the John Martyn scene, when Blackwell phoned up needing someone to add guitar parts to “No Woman, No Cry” and “Lively Up Yourself”. Anderson, like his countryman Wayne Perkins on *Catch A Fire*, was unsure how to move his fingers

around reggae’s unfamiliar accents. He later recalled Marley asking him to “play the blues”, which had the desired effect. Anderson is immediately prominent on “Lively Up Yourself”, the re-recording of a 1971 Tuff Gong single that opens the album, in which he fills up as much space as he can while trying to keep out of the way as much as possible. You’d think he’d been playing with Marley for years.

The real masterstroke of *Natty Dread*, though, is the introduction of the I Three. If Bob Marley & The Wailers were to tour the planet as a united force behind their leader’s charismatic personality, the role of the three backing singers – Rita, Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt, who doubled as choreographer – would be crucial. Backing singers don’t just echo lyrics, they illustrate to the audience that the frontman is worth echoing in the first place. Rich in combined studio experience, the I Three did much more than simply replace Tosh and Bunny in the stereo picture. They brought harmony and sparkle – and dare one say femininity – to a tough, sparse sound that might otherwise have been inflexibly masculine. Witness accounts say that Marley, in planning the shape and personnel of a brand-new Wailers, was surprisingly slow to wake up to the I Three’s potential. But once he took them on tour, nobody looked back.

Like one of those early Dylan albums where witty satires are juxtaposed alongside scathing tirades, *Natty Dread* balances the tone of its sermons carefully to ensure that the gospel is three-dimensional. The violent political climate of 1970s Jamaica is a palpable influence. Sounds of gunfire and threats of police beatings can be heard and sensed in the air. The exceptional “Rebel Music (3 O’clock Roadblock)” relates an incident in which Marley and some friends were stopped by the police in the early hours and ordered out of their car. Looking for weapons and ganja, the officers didn’t care about Marley the songwriter or Marley the reggae ambassador. Given the hostility shown by the authorities towards Rastafarians at the time, he risked being arrested merely for having dreadlocks. His humiliation at being handled like a nonentity allows for some humour in the song (“*Hey mister cop, ain’t got no birth certificate on me now*”) – a



TRACKMARKS NATTY DREAD

- 1 Lively Up Yourself ★★★★★
- 2 No Woman, No Cry ★★★★★
- 3 Them Belly Full (But We Hungry) ★★★★★
- 4 Rebel Music (3 O’Clock Roadblock) ★★★★★
- 5 So Jah She ★★★★★

- 6 Natty Dread ★★★★★
- 7 Bend Down Low ★★★
- 8 Talkin’ Blues ★★★★★
- 9 Revolution ★★★★★

Label: Island
Produced by: Chris Blackwell and The Wailers
Recorded at: Harry J’s,

Kingston, Jamaica; Island Studios, London
Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, guitar), the I Three – Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt (backing vocals), Aston ‘Family Man’ Barrett (bass, keys), Carlton Barrett (drums), Al Anderson

(lead guitar), Bernard ‘Touter’ Harvey, Jean Roussel (keys), David Madden (trumpet), Glen DaCosta (tenor sax), Tommy McCook (tenor sax), Ray Allen (alto sax), Lee Jaffe (harmonica), Gary Farr (harmonica)
Highest chart position: UK 43, US 92



Aston 'Family Man' Barrett and Bob Marley backstage at the Birmingham Odeon, July 18, 1975

cue for some great call-and-response interaction with the I Three – but the incident was a serious worry. If he hadn't chucked his ganja out of the window, he'd have had to write the song in prison.

Marley's ambiguous image as a spokesman and activist – he stood for peace, but also promised war; he embodied a new age of spiritual enlightenment, but also quoted from an Old Testament teeming with slaughter and retribution – meant that, back in Jamaica, his songs were scrutinised by friends and enemies alike to determine what exactly, amidst all the patois, he was actually saying. The two songs that ended the album, "Talkin' Blues" and "Revolution", sent shock waves through the island. In the first, Marley urged his fellow freedom fighters to join him in bombing a church. In the second, he demanded a bloody overthrow of the political regime and seemed to have some chilling ideas about natural selection. "Kill, cramp and paralyse all weak at conception/ Wipe them out of creation." For those paying close attention to Marley's public pronouncements, it called to mind a

comment made in an interview with RJR's Neville Willoughby the previous December: "These days are the judgment days. Only the fittest of the fittest shall survive."

Carl Gayle, a black Jamaican reviewing *Natty Dread* for UK magazine *Black Music*, was a rare voice in dismissing "Revolution" as a load of bluster ("Words like 'lightning, thunder, brimstone and fire' are wasted. The terror they are supposed to evoke never materialises"), but everyone else now had to get used to the awkward paradoxes that hung in the room every time Marley articulated Jah's ultimate reckoning. Dry your tears, sure, because things are gonna be all right, but only once the descendants of slave owners have paid a bloodcurdling price. Like Public Enemy in the years ahead, Marley let white audiences know precisely what crimes their grandfathers committed, and nor should they think he was letting them off the hook just because they'd bought *Burnin'* and *Catch A Fire*. That was the holistic approach of the revolution. "Armageddon will come," he told reporters from the *Ann Arbor Sun* matter-of-factly in 1975. "Some of the Earth must destroy, but

the kingdom can then go on." The singular calibration of figurative and literal militancy is why Marley sat next to Gil Scott-Heron in record collections, but hung next to Che Guevara on bedroom walls.

These days the salutation 'natty dread' – the term was anglicised by Blackwell from Marley's original 'knotty dread' – is applied to any well-respected Rasta in the area. It's used like a verbal high five. The internet sells amusing natty-dread ski-helmet covers for children; it's also the name of a French reggae magazine, a restaurant in Mexico ("Friendly service and a Bob Marley soundtrack. What's not to like?" – TripAdvisor) and a Rwandan pop star. But the natty dread who strolls through his neighbourhood in Marley's title track, flaunting his knotted-up locks and looking far towards Africa, is a much more unpredictable proposition than society would later have him become. He's not seeking to integrate. He's seeking to be on the right side of history when all those prophecies in the Book Of Revelation come true. When the terror his words are supposed to evoke really will materialise. 



Marley at the
Island Records
office, London,
July 24, 1975

"Politicians, they are devils!"

Backstage in Boston, Bob Marley expounds on his philosophy and Rastafarianism to **NEIL SPENCER**. There are intimations of apocalypse, but also positive vibrations galore. God, football, Emperor Selassie, the need for politicians to smoke ganja, and why one should never wax your dreadlocks: "It would be clammy and stink, mon!"



IT must have been around the 24th chorus of a seemingly endless "I Shot The Sheriff" that the audience finally cast aside whatever resistance they had left and abandoned themselves completely. Finding out that reggae is indeed another bag.

It's been an hour-and-a-half or more since The Wailers took the stage for the second show of the night and by now the occupants of the club are wringing sweat out of their jeans. Onstage, Bob Marley seems oblivious to the people standing on the tables, the shouts, and the shady glances his two girl singers are exchanging. He's improvising whole new verses to the song, getting into his weird

knees-up/shank-up routine. Locked inside his personal exorcism of emotion, gripped by Rasta spirits, lurching round the stage, hair exploding out of that tautly featured head.

Behind him on the wall hangs a portrait of Haile Selassie, framed in the Rastafarian colours of red, orange and green, presiding over the proceedings.

"This is the Trenchtown experience," says compère and lights man Neville at the start of the show, and it's no idle phrase: The Wailers are the sound of the Kingston ghetto, Bob Marley is its finest street poet, and this is the most exciting gig I've seen in months.

And this is also Boston, Massachusetts, US of A, a lengthy port of call in a six-week long tour of the States that's amassed Marley and The Wailers a stack of rave reviews wherever they've played and which is due to arrive in England this week for a disappointingly short set of dates prior to the band's return to Jamaica.

The band have visited the States before, once for a short tour on their own, once playing back-up to Sly And The Family Stone, and each time received considerably more than a murmur of critical approval. In fact, they already command a strong cult following among both black and white US audiences, a following that has widened with the release of the epochal *Natty Dread*.

But it's Clapton's hit version of "I Shot The Sheriff" that has introduced Marley's name to most of the white kids who turn up to see the band. That and the buzz that has run along the hip grapevine; why, only two days previous to this gig, NY's prestigious *Village Voice* has given a back page accolade to the band, headlining Marley as "The Mick Jagger Of Reggae". A bit misleading that – irrelevant, even – but still.

On the whole, though, reggae is still an unknown quantity in the States. The only hit that could vaguely be called reggae is "Sheriff"... They don't even get the odd Ken Booth or John Holt record in the chart to keep their ear in – and though *The Harder They Come* is a huge cult thing (it's been playing Boston for three years continuously now), only Marley – and to a lesser extent Jimmy Cliff – have made any impact as individual artists.

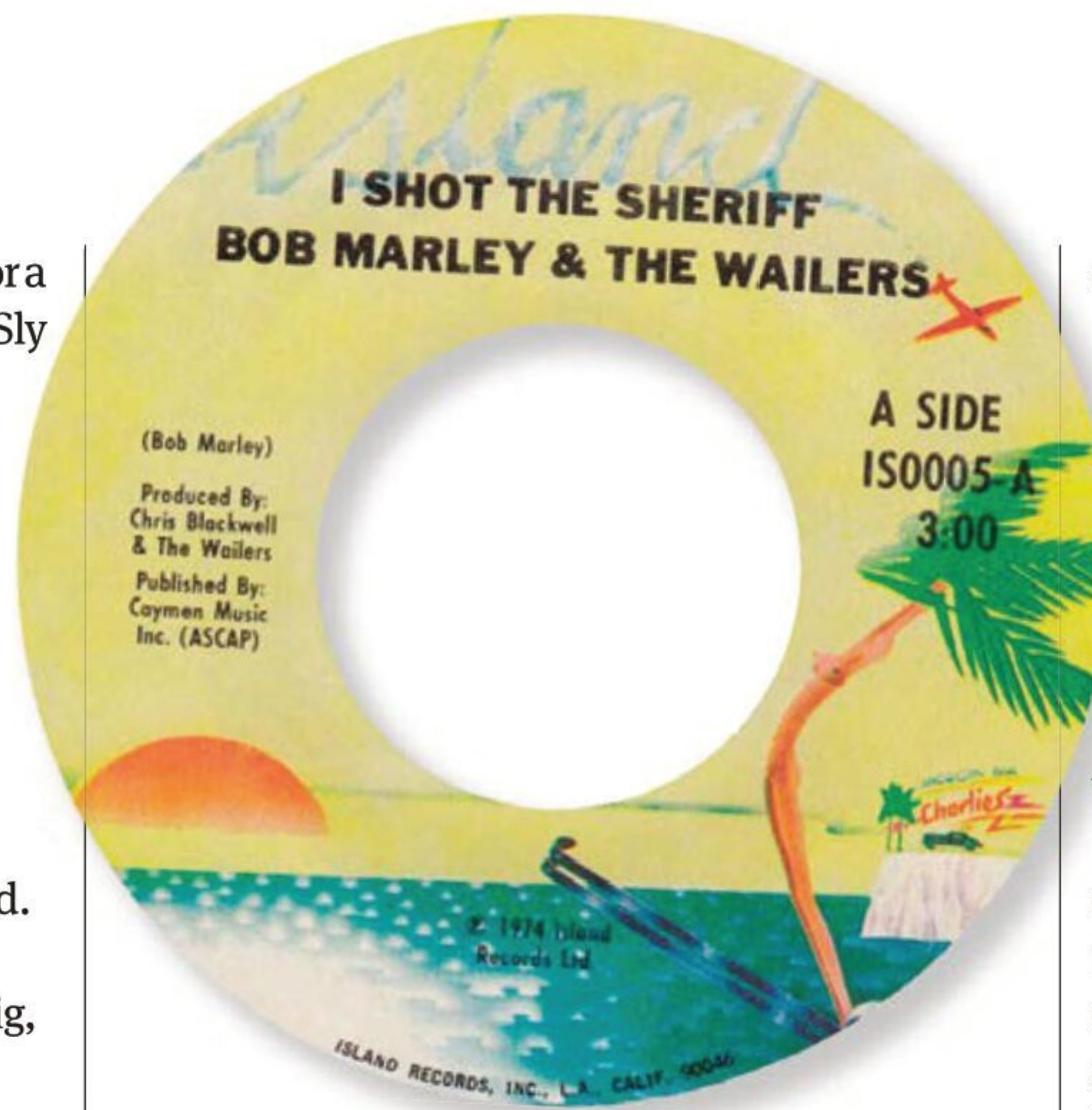
In Boston, The Wailers are playing a smallish club that turns out to be an old hootenanny haunt a dozen years on ("The green pastures of Harvard University") and which normally hosts its fair share of top-flight rock and soul acts, but never gets packed like this. The club's run by earnest bearded men who wear their hair in ponytails and spend most of the second show each night trying to keep people in their seats. One turns angrily on a black couple dancing in the aisle and receives a torrid badmouthing in Jamaican patois for his troubles. He reels back confused. Something is happening here... And it's been the same wherever Marley has played – a hidden underground of Jamaican immigrants has emerged from the ghettos and transformed the atmosphere of the gigs into something more like the Four Aces, Dalston than what you might expect in the likes of Cleveland and Detroit. In Chicago, for instance, a gang of JA rude boys refused to leave the club between shows, scaring the proprietor half out of his wits with What They Might Do Next.

Imagine what the gig in New York's Central Park must have been like, with a crowd of 15,000, a sizeable portion of them from a Jamaican population estimated 'very unofficially' by the consulate to be around 250,000, but put nearer twice that figure by sources closer to the roots.

THERE'S BEEN important changes since I last saw the band some 18 months back, with the departure of Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston, founder members from way back when in '64 when the Wailers were a five-piece harmony outfit fresh out of school.

It was Bunny and Tosh who supplied the high, pure, Impressions-style harmonies that were The Wailers' trademark, matching their name while later, with the addition of the Barrett Brothers' rhythm section, they played guitar and congas respectively.

Marley's reticent about the reasons for the split: "Mebbe they don't like the tour too much," he says, "but they're still brethren so... greeyat, y'know, we



still play together sometime. But music is music and me miss the music if the music leave – but the music stay..."

He's right. The music has stayed. Some of the pastoral purity of the old lineup on numbers like "Hallelujah Time" has gone, but the inclusion of the I Three (Judy Mowatt and Rita Marley's backup voices) has re-sensualised the backdrop, while the band as a whole have an earthy gutsy power in live performance that's only hinted at on the albums.

The performance I'd seen last time round was looser, more erratic, opening with a lengthy bout of

"YOU MUST HAVE A LEADER... WE CHOOSE A DIVINE KING"

BOB MARLEY

Rasta drumming and chanting, before moving into a freewheeling set that had, for example, Marley strutting up and down the stage playing a solo chaka-chaka-chaka rhythm for five minutes before the rest of the band would drop in behind him.

This time it's different. The band, now eight-strong and evidently drilled with commanding professional thoroughness, surge with power and breathtaking tightness, loading every riff with poise and majesty. From the first casual clatter of Carlton Barrett's drums as they sync into "Trenchtown Rock", it's obvious that the

forementioned acclaim was no hollow praise.

Apart from the inclusion of Rita and Judy into the lineup, there's been the arrival of Al Anderson, a young American guitarist who plays an almost surreptitious lead, and the equally youthful Tyrone Downing, whose Hammond organ offers thoughtful shadings on "No Woman, No Cry", and who otherwise sets his clavinet growling and murmuring in sympathy with the rest of the band.

The idea of a rhythm section is redundant here; everyone contributes to the sway. Unobtrusive at the back of the stage is Seeko Patterson, a constant elder companion to Marley for years, his face lined and scarred with street experience, and now brought in on congas. Marley himself plays thoughtful rhythm guitar (like Lennon said – "It's an important job... to make a band drive"), scrubbing chords out of his Gibson and subtly but surely directing the band's energy flow.

Behind him is Aston "Family Man" Barrett. Marley's first musical lieutenant on stage and record, underpinning the constant flux with bass figures that lope and stalk and aren't afraid to leave gaps. His nimble runs contrast with an almost studiously indolent stance; he hardly seems to move, peering under hooded lids from under his trademark woolly titfer.

Carlton Barrett (Aston's brother) is almost equally inscrutable beneath the long shadow of his hunting cap. He provides an unflagging metric for the rest of the group, going round his tom-toms at most 20 times per night, paradiddles extra.

But it's Marley who holds the stage and on whom most eyes are content to rest – a slight wiry figure crowned with a gorgon's head of dreadlocks that bounce, flop and whirl around a face undergoing a continuous process of emotional contortion.

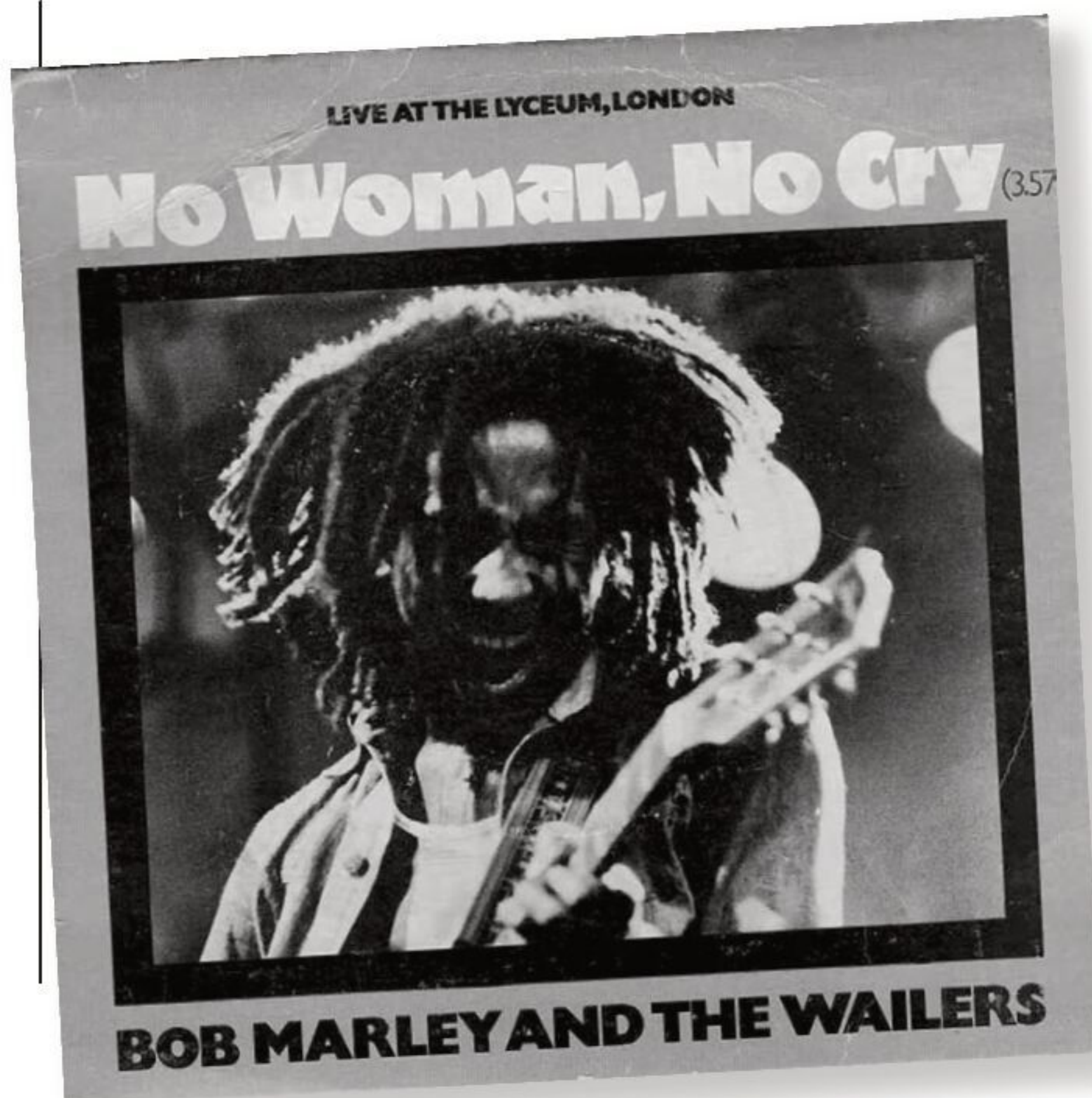
The voice... Its range, from the buoyant whoops of "Lively Up Yourself" to the heartfelt tenderness of "No Woman, No Cry" (slowed down to half pace and invested with spell-binding soul intensity), is truly remarkable.

"NO WOMAN" is the only downtempo item on the bill. Otherwise things throb and churn through an exuberant "Get Up, Stand Up", the revamped "Trenchtown Rock" (which Marley later tells me will appear on his next album), a tremendous sweeping "Stir It Up" and an irresistible "Kinky Reggae", for me the surprise of the show. On record it always seemed a slight and strained joke – live, it's archetypal dance reggae. Finally, there's a growling, almost sinister "I Rebel Music" which seems to go on forever.

But then it's all "Rebel Music" songs smouldering with the singer and lackadaisical humour of the ghetto – laced with ganja, and shot through with the apocalyptic undertones of Rastafarian idealism. Music that stands up to anything that the '70s (or, for that matter, the '60s) have produced – and which has never lost touch with its roots.

Backstage between shows, Marley, obviously enjoying his star status, holds open court to a procession of well-wishers: loud American hippies who bring offerings of Colombian grass, young Jamaicans who've moved to the States to earn good money as welders and builders and who exchange furious rapid-fire raps in unintelligible patois.

Street brothers, groupies – all milling about in the sweet, heavy smoke of one tiny dressing room.



A young black with a cornrow haircut sticks his head through the door and yells “Pos’tive vibrations!” “Yeah, mon, pos’tive vibrations,” replies Marley, grinning fit to crack his face.

On the wall of Marley’s motel room there’s a large handmade poster for The Wailers’ tour that has the same phrase scrawled across the bottom, big and fat: ‘POSITIVE VIBRATIONS’.

It’s a phrase that he’s particularly fond of. More, it’s a keystone in the man’s approach to life – a strong straightforward approach that reflects both the man’s personal character and his belief in the ideals of Rastafarianism.

You can’t get far into roots reggae without confronting the stumbling block of Rastafarianism. Walk past any record store in areas like Stoke Newington or Brixton in London, Moss Side in Manchester, wherever, and you’ll hear the likes of Big Youth or Johnny Clarke wailin’ about “*moving outta Babylon*”, and about the youth who are “*dread* *than dread*”. Or just check out *Natty Dread* itself, a brilliant call to cultural arms – ask Bob Marley about Rasta beliefs and you’ll get lines from his songs quoted back at you.

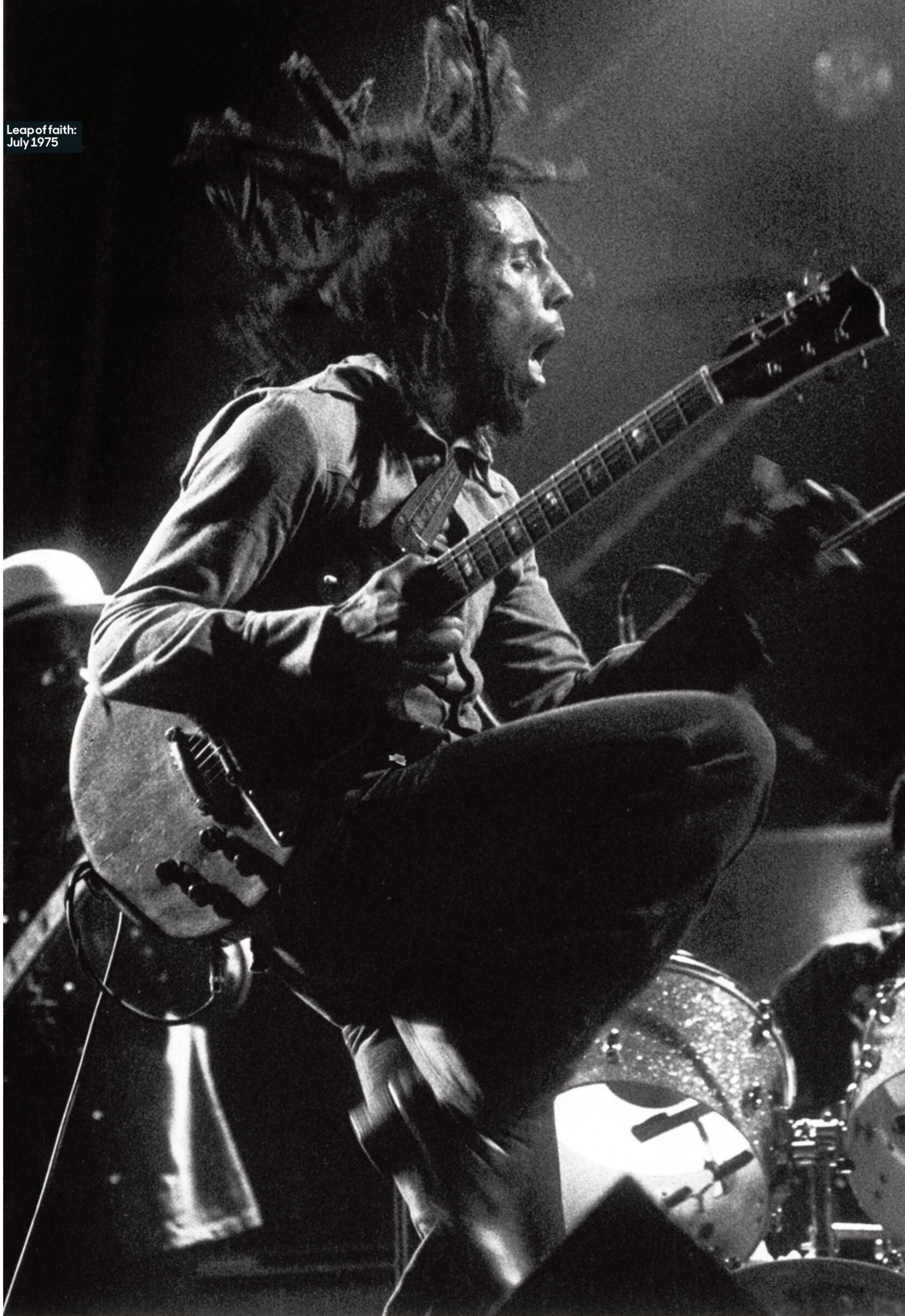
You can’t paraphrase the Rasta doctrine into a few flippant paragraphs – it’s religion, revolution, lifestyle, music, fashion, even... a system of belief based on texts from The Bible that likens the black man’s estrangement from Africa, via slavery, to the tribes of Israel cast out of their homeland into Babylon. And which takes Haile Selassie, Emperor Of Ethiopia (now deposed) as “Ras Tafari” the “Head Creator”; “The Lord Judah who shall break every chain”, as The Bible tells it.

Perhaps most of all, Rasta is an inspiration for the downtrodden, an idea that cements the brethren (who call themselves ‘I’) together. You don’t have to be “Natty Dread” to be a Rasta, but the dreadlocks that Marley proudly sports – in truth, they’re reaching epic proportions – are part of the belief, an outward symbol of his faith. “Plenty people have the wrong idea about this locks thing,” he says, twirling a clutch of braids. “Like I read in a magazine: ‘Marley came on stage with his waxed locks.’ Now that is very much a lie, because I could never sit down and put wax on my ’air, my wool, to keep it together. It would be clammy and stink, mon. Them blind mon! This come natural.”

The term “Natty Dread” itself is a verbal osmosis from ‘knotty head’, the kind of thing that the shantytown kids might yell after a Rasta ragamuffin.

“Y’know, people used to call you ‘Natty ’ead’ as an insult, but me use it as a crown, ’cos me t’ink positive, mon. Me crown meself with it.

Leap of faith:
July 1975



“Y’call me ‘natty’ead’... greeyat,” he chuckles, “because who care what you tink? Me no vex meself while you laugh. Laugh and the world laugh, mon, so me dig it, so me live.

“Y’see, me personally jus’ wanna do... t’ink positive about everyone and everything, pure and clean, and me can walk and do things freely.”

There’s passion in his voice and laughter in his speech. The talk about freedom is no empty mouthing. Back home in JA, Marley lives the Rasta lifestyle, footloose, fancy free... and constantly and righteously ripped on the fierce Jamaican ganja (grass) that the Rastas hold sacred.

Free, too, because of the Rasta faith that all things that Jah (God) does are for the best. In this sense,

the Rastas are passive, content to let the world rush about its mad business while they concentrate on matters spiritual. “Love and peace” was a Rasta greeting before the hippies were thought of. It’s a passive attitude that extends even to the recent deposition of Selassie by the Ethiopian military.

“What Jah do well done mon... I’m do all these things for the benefit of we, for the benefit of the people of Ethiopia. It just a change, a cycle...”

I mention that Selassie is now a very old man. Marley laughs in disbelief: “Im ever young, the youngest man on earth. ’Im control time.”

Interestingly, Selassie himself has never acknowledged the divinity bestowed upon him by the Rastas – though equally he’s never denied ►

it either. In any case, his coronation in 1930 was taken as fulfilment of the fire-eating prophecies of Marcus Garvey in the '20s (the John The Baptist of the movement) that the black man in the west would not be free until a black king was crowned in Africa.

"People must have a leader. Them say the ants don't have no leader, but they gather food and move together, but I don't think people can do that. You must 'ave a leader, and we choose a divine king instead of a politician.

"E's not just like one person; it's one way of thinking. Jah is your aim, one aim, which is life and love..."

Michael, a soft-spoken fellow, who is travelling companion and cook for the band (many Rastas don't eat meat or salt), nods affirmatively. He's been reading passages from his huge battered black Bible to me to back up what he and Bob have been telling me about the Rastas; Revelation 5 and 19 for example: "There shall be wars and rumours of wars... Efraime shall not vex Judah."

"It's the last days without a doubt," he says quietly. "1975, it's the last quarter before the year 2000, and righteousness – the positive way of thinking – must win, good over evil, we're confident of victory..."

Before the end of the century, see, comes the Apocalypse, the Second Coming, wherein the "West shall perish" and "Righteousness cover the earth" – a message that's illustrated musically on tracks like 'Revolution'.

It's the sort of biblical interpretation that's

caused deep enmity between the Rastas and the established Christian church, an enmity that crops up in Marley's "Talking Blues"; "*Cos I feel like bombing a church/Now I know the preacher is lying.*"

"Politics and church," opines Marley, "are the same thing. Them keep the people in ignorance, and Jah no goin' come and say 'I am God and you should praise me'." He cackled heartily at the thought.

"These guys who preach are false – y'don't 'ear the preacher say God will return to Earth within 2,000 years – how come you don't hear that in church if it's in The Bible? The greatest thing them can say is about death – 'cos them say you die and go to 'eaven after all this sufferation. To go through all sufferation for that." S'like after me sick, me go to the doctor. No, the greatest thing is life, mon, life."

Michael quotes softly from Jeremiah 23: "Woe to the pastors who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, said the Lord..."

"POLITICS AND CHURCH KEEP PEOPLE IN IGNORANCE"

BOB MARLEY

"Politicians," continues Marley with a vengeance, "they are devils, devils who corrupt. They don't smoke 'erb (ganja), because when y'smoke, y'think alike and them don't wan' that..."

Heavy stuff indeed, clearly not the sort of thing you kick around at an interview with most rock bands, especially not on tour in America. But with Marley it's an inescapable confrontation. At one point during the proceedings after Michael has murmured Psalm 57, Bob reclines and gazes meditatively upward.

"Y'know, Jah appear to me in a vision – and every time he look just a bit older than me. 'Im don't look 90-year-old or anything – like if I'm 30 (which he is), then 'im look about 35. Man, it's so sweet; it's me brother, me father, me mother, me creator, everything..."

It's an anecdote that might well lay behind a new song that Bob tells me he's written called "Natural Mystic": "*Many more will 'ave to die, many more will 'ave to cry,*" he quotes.

"It's like people ask you plenty questions, but you can't answer all of them, but you still try."

Hmmm. Very apt.

ONE WAY and another, it's easy to see how the Rastas have been wiggling out the British-orientated middle and upper classes of Jamaica. As an excellent article by Michael Thomas in *Rolling Stone* some two years back put it: "The Rastas were making a bizarre public display of pissing on everything upward that the middle class believed in, rejecting their entire earthly existence wholesale... and they became for a time the scapegoats of a frightened society."

Since then the ruling elite and comfortable middle classes have realised that the Rastas are more interested in their own spirituality than in overthrowing the government. "We don't consider the Rastas a problem any more," said Jamaican foreign minister Dudley Thompson recently, "only a phenomenon." After all, with an apocalypse on the way, you don't need to get involved with revolutionary politics.

"Me don't want fight no guy with no guns," confirms Marley. "We musn't fight for my right, my right must come to me. You stand up for your right and don't give up the fight (a quote from "Get Up, Stand Up"), but you don't fight for your right."

Still, phenomenon or problem, the Rastas are here to stay. "What was once Rasta culture is now Jamaican culture," said Perry Henzell, the white Jamaican who produced and directed *The Harder They Come*. "There's no dividing the two."

Certainly throughout the history of Jamaican music, it's been the Rastas who have supplied the impetus for change, working against the orthodoxy of the hustlers and record company pirates that man the cut-throat JA music business, to evolve a new distinctive music. From the roots.

Marley will tell you how it was musicians like Roland Alphonso, Tommy McCook, Ernie Ranglin and most of all Don Drummond – a brilliant Rasta trombonist who spent the last days of his life in a madhouse – who started the ska movement back in the early '60s; a pool of musicians who often recorded under the collective name of The Skatalites. (Remember the crazy brass of "Guns Of Navarone"?) The Skatalites played on some of the earliest Wailers' tracks, when the group were cutting hits for Clement Dodd first as a vocal quintet, then a vocal trio. Numbers like "Simmer Down" and "Put It On", and later still "Rude Boy", one of the first records to herald the metamorphosis of ska into the more earthy and compelling "Rock Steady" rhythms of the middle '60s.

"Rude Boy" also started a craze for 'Rudie' records, based on and appealing to the hard-living wild youth of the Kingston ghetto. The outlaw Rudie was also an identity that Bob, Bunny and Tosh themselves basked in. The success of their records inspired the band to split from Coxsone and start their own label – Wailing Soul – named after The Wailers and a girlie outfit called The Soulettes, which was the basis for what are now the I Three.

The label folded.

"I thought me no gonna work for no one again, so we split from Coxsone – we form Wailin' Soul, but like, I don't know 'owt about the business, and me get caught again," admits Marley. "Bend Down Low" was No 1 in Jamaica at the time, but

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

At the offices of Island Records, London, July 24, 1975



Live at the
Roxy, LA,
July 10, 1975



them press it and sell it – it was a black market type o’ business.”

There was also jail sentences on first Bunny, and then Bob, on ganja raps – events which, in the context of the JA music biz, are open to Machiavellian interpretation, though later Marley glosses over the incident to me with a murmur about being held for a few hours for driving without a licence. It’s typical of his enigmatic style.

No matter, the failure of Wailing Soul caused a temporary hiatus in the group’s output. Marley left for the States, and later, after being signed by Johnny Nash and his manager, to Sweden for an abortive project on a film score. No doubt, it was a bitter time for him.

Whatever, the group’s ’69 comeback with crack producer Lee Perry ushered in a new period of creativity, with songs like “Duppy Conqueror”, “Soul Rebel” and “Small Axe”, some of which have appeared in revamped form on the Island trilogy, and which scorched their way into the Jamaican charts at the time.

Within a couple of years, the group were bigger than ever and had split from Perry and established their own Tuff Gong label, which still handles their material today, as well as that by the I Three and the solo output of Family Man, Bunny and Tosh.

Marley is bitter in his condemnation of the music scene at home. He has a list of dues paid that are second to none, ripped off, exploited and conned.

“Them guys on the machine (the producers), all them wanna do is ’ustle quick – like you find a guy put out 200 songs a year with 60 different singers (laughs). And like them guys don’t play no music, them only have the equipment, and them try and make it so you don’t get no money.”

He recalls with glee how the artists themselves – and not the all-important production bosses – initiated the reggae rhythms of the late ’60s to escape from the crippling monopoly of the trade: “Them guy on the machine ’ave all the Rock Steady, so we come up with something new, we start to play reggae, and all the Rock Steady them ’ave them ’ave to park it ’cos reggae take over. But the type of people who flood the market – it’s like yer getting dregs of water instead of clean water, mon.”

Ask Marley who he likes on the current Jamaican recording scene and he’ll tell you: “Me love all the reggae artists, man, knowing that they don’t understand the situation and that them can do better. Me love all of them, ’cos them ’ave the same feeling as me.”

WITH his signing to Island in 1972 and prior to that the establishment of a regular self-sufficient lineup that had imported the Barrett brothers’ rhythm section from Lee Perry’s studio band, the Upsetters, Marley’s days of artistic frustration and being ripped off are hopefully a thing of the past. Certainly the extended studio time that the Island deal allowed him, together with decent production facilities, resulted with *Catch A Fire* in a profound departure from the primitive production standards that had been associated sometimes unfairly with reggae up to that time.

Unlike other reggae artists – Jimmy Cliff is the most outstanding example – who have lost both their musical roots and their roots appeal in an attempt to “go commercial”, The Wailers (or “Bob Marley & The Wailers” as the title goes these days) still get No 1s on the Jamaican charts with

disconcerting regularity. To the JA youth, Marley is still a “soul rebel”, an outlaw hero who stands alongside latterday Rasta idols like Augustus Pablo, I Roy and U Roy and the whole gamut of dub and voiceover artists (and even producers like King Tubby and Perry) who, unlike Marley, don’t get covered in the white rock press.

Not yet, at least. They’re simply too far out. Until white ears get accustomed to their bizarre production tricks and uncompromising rhythmic concentration.

Whether Marley can escape from being merely a rock cult – albeit a headily fanatic one – and make the kind of breakthrough that would take him into the album charts remains to be seen. But as one commentator remarked last week, that isn’t likely to happen until his music is given the radio airplay now afforded to both black funkadelics and white rock. A hit single might shake nations.

Though at the moment Marley says he’s not really concentrating too much on his next album, he already has a few numbers written and ready. Apart from the aforementioned “Natural Mystic”, there’s a number called “Turn Over” that Marley describes as “a song like ‘Bend Down Low’ or that intricate love song type o’ bag.”

There’s also to be a restyled version of his first Tuff Gong smash, “Trenchtown Rock”, which already plays a prominent part in his stage act.

As I leave the interview, Marley’s already juggling a football on his feet, itching for what is apparently a lengthy daily workout (his physical condition is pretty impressive). Back home, he tells me, they have a Tuff Gong team that has Alan Cole as skipper – a Rasta who spent a time playing at top club level in Brazil. A team fuelled on ganja could take over the world. 🌱

LIVE!

RELEASED 5 DECEMBER 1975

July 17, 1975: Bob Marley & The Wailers send London's Lyceum into raptures. Five months later, a live recording radically amplifies that impact.

BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE week Bob Marley arrived in London in July 1975 to play the most important concerts of his life, his image appeared on the cover of both *New Musical Express* and *Black Music*. Such a dual accolade was both highly unusual and invested with significance. The two magazines had very different readerships, and the crossover of interest between them was at the time limited to a handful of black acts who'd become credible album artists among white rock fans: Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, maybe Sly Stone.

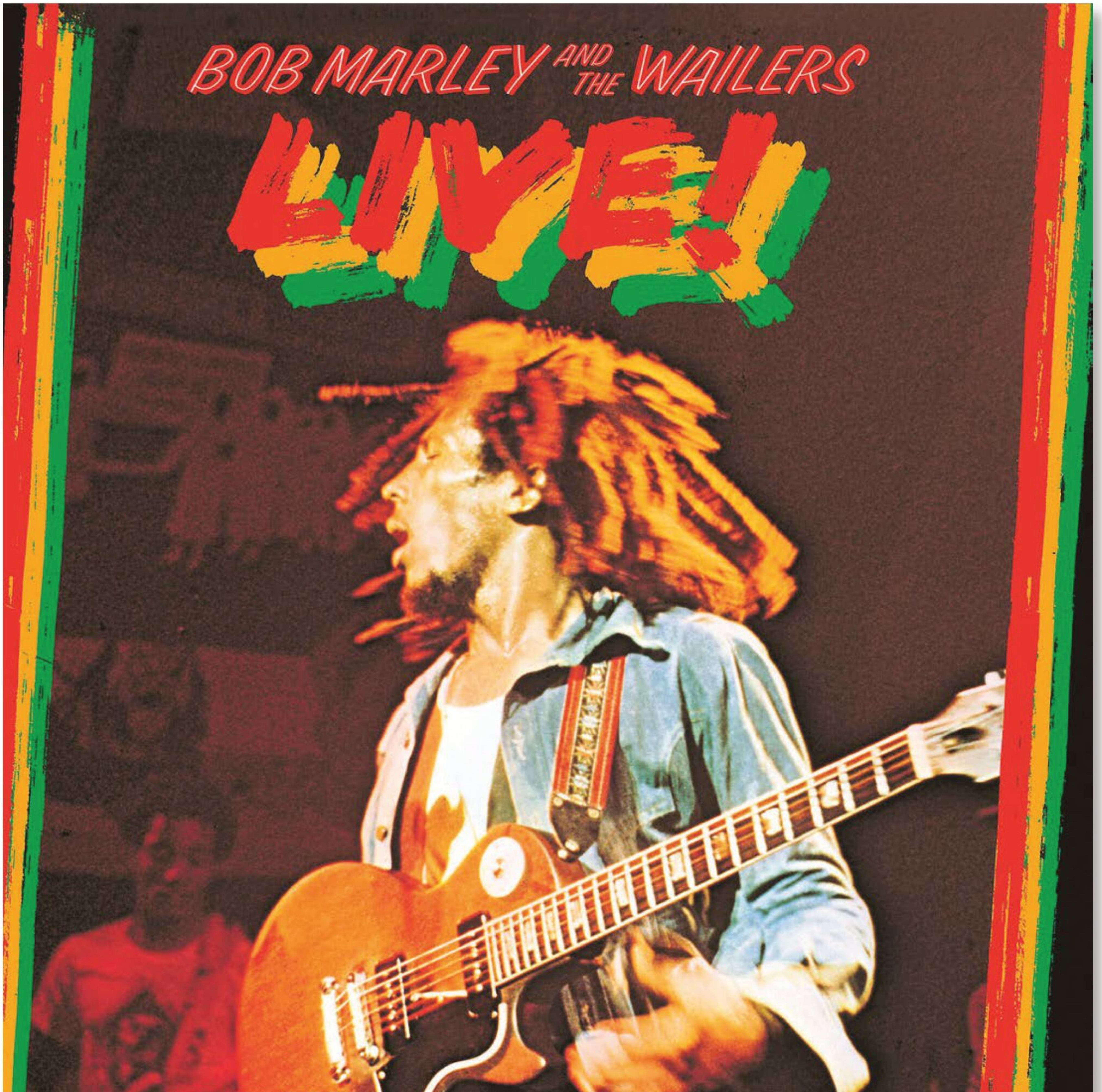
Neil Spencer's *NME* cover story can be read elsewhere in this *Ultimate Music Guide* (p50), but it's also instructive to quote from Carl Gayle's article in *Black Music*. "Natty Dread is in town, the soul rebel from Kingston and Ethiopia, who with his pride of culture and uncompromising stance in music as in life, is breaking down the colour barrier," he wrote. Bob Marley was about to change all that: "They will come to hear the music," Gayle continued, "but not so much as they will come to see his face, the man and his image."

His next paragraph made it clear that he was not talking about *Black Music* readers, but about how the Kingston soul rebel had captured *NME*'s white rock audience: "They're a little awestruck by the fire they've

seen in his pictures and have heard in his voice, by his aggression and his beauty. And they would be more than a little ill at ease in his presence. But they've already been hypnotised, they cannot resist. So that when he tells them to lively up themselves, there will be no alternative, he's got them under his spell."

Gayle's words then rushed towards an almost orgiastic crescendo: "There's going to be burnin' and lootin', weepin' and wailin' tonight. An atmosphere of carnal expectancy and revolution tonight. Tonight, tonight!"

When Marley awoke on July 17, 1975 in the flat off the King's Road that Island Records had provided for him and was handed a copy of Gayle's article, he could be forgiven if he nervously wondered whether he could live up to such expectations. That afternoon in rehearsal, he pushed the Wailers to the limit and, with his fellow founder members Tosh and Livingston now gone, he was particularly hard on newcomers, keyboard player Tyrone Downie and guitarist Al Anderson. The Barrett brothers – drummer Carlton and Aston 'Family Man' on bass – held down the rhythm with a rocksteady one-drop, supported by Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson, a 45-year-old former bauxite miner who had been an early mentor to the teenage Marley and then the Wailers' roadie, but who was now elevated to banging various bongos, congas, ➤



**AS CONCERT
ALBUMS GO, IT'S
FAITHFUL AND
HONEST AND
OVERDUBS ARE
ADMIRABLY ABSENT**

tambourines and cowbells onstage. Over this simmering soundbed sat the backing voices of two-thirds of the I Three, Rita Marley and Judy Mowatt (missing the pregnant Marcia Griffiths).

As the hot and sultry afternoon turned into a sticky and humid city evening, ticket holders began queuing around the Lyceum, an ornate vaudeville palace at the Aldwych end of the Strand. Carl Gayle had been right: Marley was “breaking down the colour barrier”. Dreadlocked Rastafarians jostled good-naturedly with ragged-arsed hippy boys and their smock-wearing girlfriends. Inside, the Lyceum was like a sweatbox and the aroma of marijuana hung heavy in the air, as compere Tony Garnett announced: “This I wan’ tell ya, is the Trench Town experience... all the way from Trench Town, Jamaica, Bob Marley & The Wailers!”

Flanked by portraits of Marcus Garvey and Hailie Selassie, and with the stage swathed in the Rastafarian colours of red, green and gold, the Barretts started up a churning rhythm and a fired-up Marley ran onstage bursting with energy like a footballer taking the pitch in a cup final. He high-stepped straight into the immortal words, “One good t’ing ’bout music, when it ’it ya feel no pain.” The I Three shimmied and the place erupted into one seething, swaying, dancing mass feeling no pain at all. Some 42 years on, the memory of the moment still makes the hairs on the back of this writer’s neck stand on end.

Marley was in shamanic form that night. He despised politicians and preachers alike, but he evoked both the fervour of a political rally and the evangelical intensity of a gospel revival as “Trench Town Rock” gave way to a righteous trinity of his most insurrectionary songs in “Burnin’ And Lootin’”, “Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)” and “Rebel Music (3 O’Clock Roadblock)”. He softened the mood with the gentle eroticism of “Stir It Up” and “No Woman, No Cry” before raising the tempo again with “Natty Dread” and a skanking “Kinky Reggae”. Finally he returned with the band for a euphoric encore of “I Shot The Sheriff” and a righteous 10-minute jam on “Get Up, Stand Up”. The following evening he would do it all again, adding “Slave Driver” and “Lively Up Yourself” to the setlist.

As we melted away into the still warm night, everyone knew we had witnessed something special, one of those rare time-has-come moments when you’re privileged to be present at a critical juncture in musical history, a show that marked not only Marley’s personal apotheosis, but reggae’s coming of age.

“Fantastic Wailers rock Britain – Marley, king of reggae!” an excited *Melody Maker* front page blazed the following week. “Dozens of fans rushed the stage and stood with their arms outstretched, trying to touch the wild-haired prophet who hopped and darted above them,”

CRITICS’ VERDICT

“This is everything that a Wailers ‘live’ album should be – an irresistible, sweat-drenched ‘live’ classic that’s at once an ideal introduction to Marley’s music and videos, and a perfect memento of this year’s US and UK tour. Throughout, the band plays exemplary, brilliant stuff, growing with sultry power...”
NEIL SPENCER, NME, NOVEMBER 29, 1975

Stephen Davis recalled a decade later in his biography of Marley. “Someone to believe in, someone to follow.”

Standing at the back of the hall on both nights was Chris Blackwell, supervising the recording of the shows on the Rolling Stones mobile unit. “I don’t know how many the Lyceum holds, but nowhere near as many as those who have since told me they were there,” Blackwell told *Uncut* in 2001. “Bob Marley broke out from that show. He already had a white rock following because the *Catch A Fire* album wasn’t a straight reggae record and we had designed it to appeal to a white rock audience. But everyone who was at the Lyceum concerts was so incredibly moved by that performance that they all went away and carried the word like they were missionaries.”

Blackwell had taken the decision to record the Lyceum shows a few weeks earlier, following a showcase gig by Marley and the Wailers at the Roxy in LA, attended by an audience that included Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, Robbie Robertson, members of the Grateful Dead, Joni Mitchell, Billy Preston, Herbie Hancock, Buddy Miles and Cat Stevens.

“He sang ‘No Woman, No Cry’ and the audience over in the right-hand corner started to sing along. I can picture it now,” Blackwell told *Uncut*. “It was a fantastic moment and I realised that we had to record him singing that song live. I knew it could be a hit single, but it had to be recorded in front of an audience with them creating the atmosphere and being part of it. The Wailers were off to England just after that and the Lyceum seemed the obvious place to record it.”

In a typically audacious move, the version of the song recorded on the second night at the Lyceum was released as a single two months later and rose to No 22 in the UK charts (it was to make No 8 six years later, on its reissue following Marley’s death).

Any other record company boss would surely have released the wonderful studio version of “No Woman, No Cry” on *Natty Dread* as a single. But after seeing the anthemic quality the song took on in concert, Blackwell wanted more, and it joined Chuck Berry’s “My Ding-a-Ling”, Peter Dinklage’s “Show Me The Way” and Cheap Trick’s Budokan version of “I Want

With Aston Barrett at the Birmingham Odeon, July 19, 1975 – the night after the Lyceum shows



You To Want Me” on a relatively short list of hit singles recorded live in concert.

Two months after its release as a single, “No Woman, No Cry” appeared with six other songs recorded over the two nights at the Lyceum on the album *Live!*. As concert albums go, it’s faithful and honest and overdubs are admirably absent. In line with Blackwell’s vision of the audience “creating the atmosphere and being part of it”, the

TRACK MARKS LIVE!

- 1 Trenchtown Rock ★★★★★
- 2 Burnin’ And Lootin’ ★★★★★
- 3 Them Belly Full (But We Hungry) ★★★★★
- 4 Lively Up Yourself ★★★★★
- 5 No Woman, No Cry ★★★★★

- 6 I Shot The Sheriff ★★★★★
 - 7 Get Up, Stand Up ★★★★★
 - 8 Kinky Reggae (bonus track on remastered CD) ★★★★★
- Label: Island

Produced by: Chris Blackwell and Steve Smith
Recorded at: The Lyceum, London
Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, rhythm guitar), Carlton Barrett (drums), Aston ‘Family Man’

Barrett (bass), Tyrone Downie (keyboards), Al Anderson (lead guitar), Alvin ‘Seeco’ Patterson (percussion), Rita Marley and Judy Mowatt (backing vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 38, US 90



recording relies on the kinetic energy between Marley and his disciples to override any fuzziness in the sound quality.

“Trenchtown Rock” is raw but irresistible. By “Burnin’ And Lootin’” Marley has moved into an almost trance-like vibe and on “Them Belly Full” he’s in full-on jamming mode, repeating lines over and over again and trading them in call-and-response style with his backing “sistahs”, as he called them when he introduced them from the stage. “Lively Up Yourself” – which is greeted with wild cheers – represents Blackwell’s only interference with documentary fidelity. It was played as the last number on the second night before the encore, but on the album it was moved up on the setlist to ensure Side One of the vinyl LP closed with a rabble-rousing crowd-pleaser.

The shift in the running order also enabled Blackwell to open Side Two with “No Woman, No Cry”, a majestic, emotional

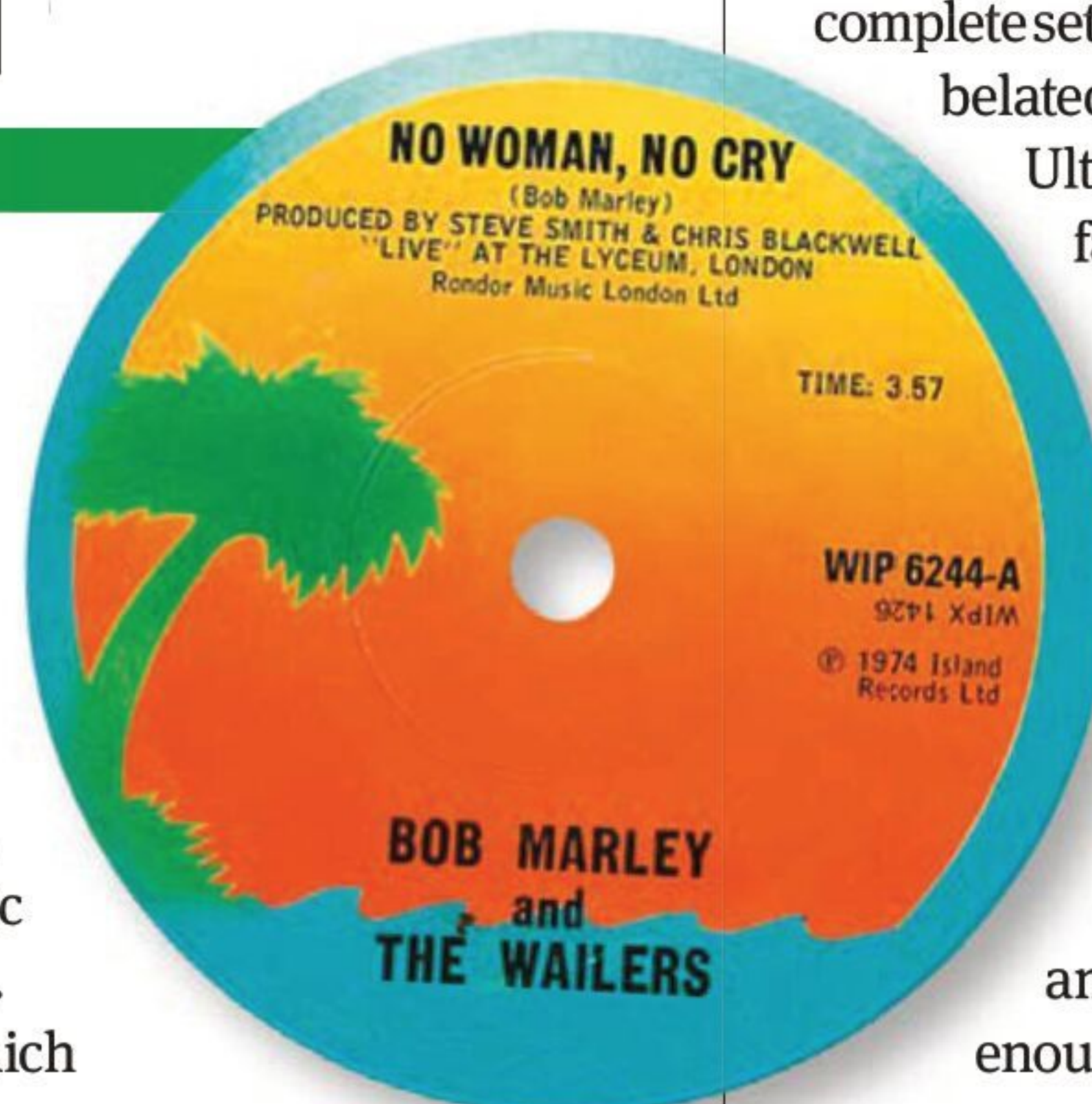
A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT THAT CAPTURES A UNIQUE MOMENT

performance even more transcendently tender than the studio version. Then it’s straight to the encore with a relaxed, skanking version of “I Shot The Sheriff” quite different from the tighter studio version on *Burnin’*, and a final burst of militancy with “Get Up, Stand Up”, on which there’s plenty of enthusiastic audience participation on the chorus. The only negative is that the track, which

broke the 10-minute barrier on both nights, fades after six and a half minutes, a victim of the constraints of vinyl.

A cooking version of “Kinky Reggae”, with obligatory band introductions, was later added to a remastered CD release, boosting the original 38 minutes to 45, and a triple vinyl package featuring the complete sets from both concerts was belatedly released in 2016.

Ultimately it’s a record that is far more than a live concert album. Like Dylan’s *The Bootleg Series Vol 4: The “Royal Albert Hall” Concert*, Cash’s *At Folsom Prison* or James Brown’s *Live At The Apollo*, it’s a historical document that captures a unique and special moment for posterity and for those unfortunate enough not to have been there. 🗣️



RASTAMAN VIBRATION

RELEASED 30 APRIL 1976

"Everywhere is war!" Embattled by business problems, Jamaican strife and a religious bereavement, Marley fights back.

BY GRAEME THOMSON

SANDWICHED between two epochal albums, *Live!* and *Exodus*, it's easy to overlook the significance of *Rastaman Vibration* in Bob Marley's catalogue. Though he may have made more revered records, and a few stronger ones, it was his eighth studio album that gave Marley the only US Top 10 album of his lifetime, finally promoting him from charismatic contender to superstar. Moreover, he did it with a record that balanced out party songs and spiritual offerings with a generous serving of rebel music. Compared to the more expansive music Marley would go on to make later in the '70s, *Rastaman Vibration* has a direct, simple urgency.

It was an album made in the teeth of several sources of upheaval – some relatively trivial, some more significant. The original incarnation of the Wailers was a thing of the past, though the established rhythm section of Carlton and Aston Barrett remained. Founding members Bunny Livingston and Peter Tosh, who'd left the group after *Burnin'*, both released their first solo albums in 1976: Tosh's brilliant *Legalize It* and Livingston's equally terrific *Blackheart Man*.

In advance of recording *Rastaman Vibration*, Marley found himself embroiled in the kind of industry dispute that tends to follow swiftly in the slipstream of mainstream success. He was at

contractual loggerheads with his publishing company, Cayman Music, which he claimed had not been paying him his due in royalties. Under existing terms, Cayman would be assigned automatic ownership of all new Marley compositions. His response was simply to falsely publish his new songs in the names of friends and family.

Vincent Ford, already credited as co-writer on "No Woman, No Cry", is listed as the composer of "Positive Vibration", "Roots, Rock, Reggae" and "Crazy Baldheads". The other songs on the album are credited to Marley's wife, Rita, the Barrett brothers, and Marley's friend, the professional footballer Allen 'Skill' Cole. In its original pressing, *Rastaman Vibration* had the distinction of being the sole Bob Marley album to feature none of the man's own compositions. In 1987, six years after his death, the Estate assumed control of these songs in court, official recognition that they had been written by him all along.

More profoundly, just as the album sessions were beginning, Marley was deeply shaken by the death of Haile Selassie, the Ethiopian ruler revered by Rastafarians as His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion Of The Tribe Of Judah, King Of Kings And Elect Of God, and known colloquially as the Black Messiah. News filtered through on August 27, 1975 that Selassie had died, aged 83, following a coup in his homeland of Ethiopia. The official cause was ➤



AN ATMOSPHERE OF
MISTRUST AND
PARANOIA SEEPS
INTO THE ALBUM



Pass the Dutchie:
Marley in
Amsterdam, 1976

respiratory failure, but there was dark talk of murder, conspiracy theories and cover-ups. Many Rastas refused to believe their beloved God incarnate was dead.

Marley's response was to postpone the album sessions until September, by which time he had rustled up a pair of tributes for the new record. One of the first songs cut for *Rastaman Vibration* was "Jah Live", a tonic to the Rasta troops who had fallen into confusion and despair at the death of their leader. "*Fools sayin' in their heart/Rasta, your God is dead,*" Marley counsels. "*But I and I know Jah! Jah!/Dreaded it shall be dreaded and dread/Jah live, children yeah!*" A balm to suffering and grief, although there is obvious sadness in its easy lilt, Marley sounds calm, strong and filled with love.

"Jah Live" provides a beatific conclusion to the album. In contrast, "War" pays tribute to the King Of Kings by immortalising his message with an infectious militancy. Its lyrics are taken directly from Selassie's address to the United Nations General Assembly on October 4, 1963. The speech had been printed in a pamphlet brought to one of the album sessions by 'Skill' Cole, which is presumably why Marley gifted Cole credit for the song.

Encompassing the universal – racial equality, world peace, human bondage – and the specific – there are calls to topple the oppressive regimes in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa – Marley turns Selassie's plea into an impassioned demi-rap. The verses stretch out and fizz like a fuse, building to an explosive chorus: "*Everywhere is war!*" It's a masterclass of phrasing and timing, Marley negotiating the speech's dense rhetorical content ("The dream of lasting peace, world citizenship, rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued but never attained") with aplomb, as the music throbs around him, anchored by a sensationally funky bassline and punctuated by a blazing horn figure. The deluxe edition of the album features an extended version of "War", with an extra verse and a particularly engaged vocal finale from Marley.

"War" is ultimately concerned with iniquities in the Rasta homeland of Africa. Closer at hand, the politics of Jamaica were brimming over into violence and anarchy. The deadly factionalism of Prime Minister Michael Manley's PNP and the opposing JLP, each backed by an enforcing squad of gangsters and rude boys, had left Jamaica in a state of near civil war. Matters were further destabilised by the interference of American CIA agents, concerned by Manley's links with Castro's Cuba and intent on infiltrating the JLP to help them win the upcoming election.

The atmosphere of mistrust and

paranoia seeps into the album, both overtly and obliquely. On the surface, “Johnny Was” is a smooth soul cut, the Curtis Mayfield touches on the chorus bolstered by fulsome backing from the I Three. Its elegant languor sits at odds with the sorrow of the song, however, concerning the death of a local boy “shot down in the street”. Marley approaches this everyday tragedy not from a combative viewpoint – though there is an inevitable dig at “the system” – but from the tender perspective of a mother who has lost her son to senseless violence. Despite an oddly stiff vocal and some incongruous synthesisers, the empathy cuts through.

“Crazy Baldhead” is a more militant warning shot across the bows of Jamaica’s non-Rasta establishment, black and white. They “brainwash education to make us the fools”, Marley sings on the first track on *Rastaman Vibration* to find him truly firing on all cylinders, not least vocally. As the intro kicks in, he emits a heart-rending shriek, like a war cry; later

RASTAMAN VIBRATION IS VERY MUCH AN ALBUM OF TWO HALVES

he scats beautifully, his moves shadowed by Al Anderson’s fluid guitar lines. Aston Barrett underpins it all with a mighty bass figure, while the percussive flourishes are bright and effective. It sounds like it could go on forever, and live it often did, but here it fades too soon, after only three minutes.

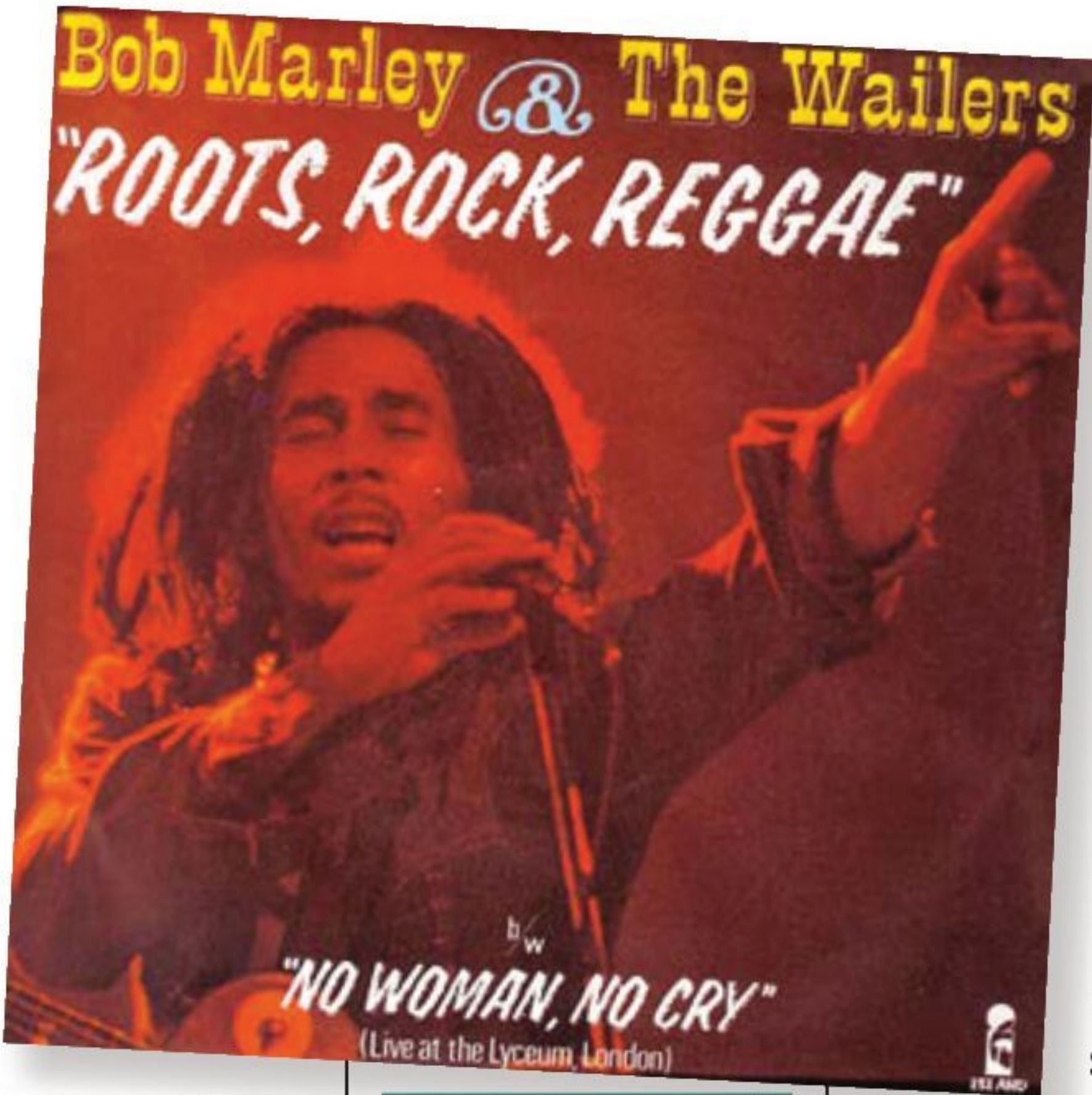
On the shunting dub-funk of “Want More” Marley sounds similarly pissed off and edgy, shouting “down back-biter” repeatedly at some slippery enemy, who is on course for a mighty reckoning: “Jah have them in the region/In the valley of decision.” “Who The Cap Fit” follows a similar line of attack, though in contrast to “Want More”’s eerie sparseness, the music here is gorgeously full, defined by a bright, sensual synth line and Marley’s disarmingly soft vocal, regretful rather than enraged. Marley alludes to Jesus’ betrayal at the Last Supper – “Some will eat and drink with you” – an image that resonated with his increasingly sanctified public profile, and the growing retinue of devout believers gathered around him. It’s a song about trust and betrayal, a gentle tirade against

backstabbers, false friends, pretenders and spillers of secrets. “Some will hate you, pretend they love you now/Then behind they try to eliminate you... Hypocrites and parasites/ Will come up and take a bite.” Given what would happen eight months after the release of *Rastaman Vibration*, it sounds spookily prescient.

“Who The Cap Fit” was originally called “Man To Man”. Similarly, the fidgety “Night Shift” was a remake of “It’s Alright” from *Soul Rebels*. Both had been recorded originally with Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, who recorded with Marley at his Black Ark studio shortly before work officially began on *Rastaman Vibration*. Perry reportedly had a hand in producing a handful of songs on the album – “the good ones, the groove ones,” according to Chris Blackwell – but was left uncredited due to some unspecified unease between the two men.

The muscular “Rat Race” certainly bears Perry’s production imprimatur. Fiery and fluent, the arrangement foregrounding a blast of classic R&B horns, it’s another track that possesses a premonitory weight. Marley’s most explicit denouncement of escalating tensions between the PNP and JLP – “Political violence fill ya city, yeah!/Don’t involve Rasta in your say-say/Rasta don’t work for no CIA” – it’s a direct attack on the shenanigans involving the politicised bully boys in Kingston’s shanty towns, and the degradation of humanity at the hands of their political puppet-masters. At these moments, *Rastaman Vibration* possesses the powerful tint of prophecy. At others, it is simply a collection of tunes, all of which are enjoyable, though some are undeniably lesser entries in Marley’s canon. “Positive Vibration” – the closest we get to a title track – preaches a simple message of positivity over a slow groove, organ to the fore, concluding that negativity is the work of the devil.

“Roots, Rock, Reggae” – derived from “Rainbow Country”, another collaboration with Perry – is a slight party tune, celebrating the uplifting power of



CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is the most scarily political album issued right across the spectrum of contemporary music in recent years... The music tackles racial discrimination head on and with a devastating cry from the heart."
RAY COLEMAN, MELODY MAKER, MAY 1, 1976

music and reggae’s growing commercial breakthrough: “We’re bubblin’ on the Top 100, just like a mighty dread!” Tommy McCook’s saxophone and Don Kinsey’s bluesy guitar overdub lend the song a slick, radio-friendly sheen. “Cry To Me” has the sweet simplicity of Marley’s earliest recordings with the Wailers. A two-chord trick, Sam Cooke set to a sharp skank, it’s the sole moment here where Marley turns his thoughts to romantic matters.

Very much an album of two halves, *Rastaman Vibration* is somewhat unbalanced, arriving frontloaded with relatively lightweight trifles, and saving its declamatory knockout blows for the latter stages. None of its 11 tracks were included on *Legend*, the posthumous 1984 compilation which secured Marley’s status as an icon, and brought his music into homes previously untouched by reggae, which may explain why the profile of *Rastaman Vibration* remains relatively modest compared to many other Marley albums. At the time, however, it did the trick. Island threw everything behind the album, launching an unprecedented promotional campaign in the US. Blackwell talked later of Marley “breaking out... [there was] real interest and momentum”. By far his most successful release to date, it was followed by the most fruitful and acclaimed tour of his life. Towards the end of a three-month jaunt around America and Europe, Bob Marley & The Wailers played five nights at Hammersmith Odeon, selling more than 20,000 tickets.

When it was all over, in the autumn of 1976, he went back home to a country rocked by political violence, to prepare for his appearance at the Smile Jamaica concert in December. The vibrations swiftly turned from positive to negative, with Marley caught in the middle. Events dictated that *Rastaman Vibration* would be the last time Jamaica’s most famous son was able to record in his homeland for three years. For the newly anointed reggae king, bloodshed and exile awaited. 9

TRACKMARKS RASTAMAN VIBRATION			
1	Positive Vibration ★★★	7	Who The Cap Fit ★★★★★
2	Roots, Rock, Reggae ★★★	8	Night Shift ★★
3	Johnny Was ★★★★★	9	War ★★★★★
4	Cry To Me ★★★★★	10	Rat Race ★★★★★
5	Want More ★★★★★	11	Jah Live ★★★★★
6	Crazy Baldhead ★★★★★	Label: Island	
		Recorded at: Harry J Studios; Joe Gibbs Studio, Kingston, Jamaica	
		Produced by: Bob Marley & The Wailers	
		Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, guitar), Earl 'Chinna' Smith (guitar, percussion), Al Anderson (guitar), Carlton Barrett (drums), Aston Barrett (bass guitar), Tyrone Downie (bass, keyboards, percussion), The I Three (backing vocals), Tommy McCook (sax), Donald Kinsey (guitar overdubs)	
		Highest chart position: UK 15, US 8	

GUSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS





“My music fight against the system”

Outside his home in Kingston, the hangers-on and users are massing. Bob Marley, though, appears unperturbed: “Must run home like mind,” he tells **RAY COLEMAN**. “Keep open.” As the Wailers prepare for their triumphant return to the UK, their leader remains sanguine about his new fame, and about the new prominence of reggae and Rastafarianism beyond the shores of Jamaica. “My music defend righteousness,” he asserts. “If you’re white and you’re wrong, then you’re wrong, if you’re black and you’re wrong, you’re wrong.”



MELODY MAKER
12/06/1976

"DON'T want success. Success mean nuttin'. Plenty people been successful, but dey still living dead." – Bob Marley

IT'S no ordinary rehearsal room, the door-less out-house in the garden of Bob Marley's house in Hope Road, Kingston, just a few minutes along from the Prime Minister's residence.

The Wailers practise here, in a room about twice the size of the average British lounge. What makes it extraordinary in atmosphere is the unmistakable feeling that when the musicians are there, playing and smoking and planning a concert or an album, it's as if nothing had ever happened and they were still jamming purely for fun, as they did 10 years ago. With few cares or considerations beyond the next tune, the new single, and not the faintest prospect of world tours and hit albums.

A drumkit lies idle, an empty guitar case here, a chair or two... and what's this? A running order is scribbled and stuck to the wall reading as follows: "Revolution"/"Natty Dread"/"So Jah Seh"/"No Woman"/"I Shot The Sheriff"/"Talking Blues"/"Road Block"/"Bellyful"/"Jah Live"/"Trenchtown Rock"/"Nice Time"/"Concrete Jungle"/"Kinky Reggae"/"Midnight Ravers"/"No More Trouble"/"Bend Down Low"/"Get Up, Stand Up"/"Rat Race"/"Burnin' And Lootin'"/"Stir It Up"/"Duppy Conqueror"/"Slave Driver"/"Rock My Boat"/"One Love"/"Thank You Lord".

On another wall, an article of faith: a portrait with the words, "Imperial Majesty, Emperor Halle Selassie, King Of Kings, Lord Of Lords."

Incongruously, a sticker is pinned beneath it: "Album of the Year – *Natty Dread*".

Bob Marley lives here, works here, plays here and if there's one thing absolutely endearing about the whole Jamaican-Rastafarian reggae story as it reaches its British peak with Bob Marley's tour next week, it's this: what you see, and what they say, is all there is. There's no hiding behind poses, and the uncluttered sound of their music runs synonymously with their personalities. The rehearsal room is the opposite of pretentious.

Marley is hard to reach. Even his friends say that strangers, particularly white ones, should not go to his house unless accompanied by a face which Marley recognises. It is virtually impossible to make an appointment to see him, because he appears not to recognise schedules, even for himself. But eventually, on that hot evening, he appeared from the table tennis room in his house and walked me outside, saying he would think better with some air.

His house is large and old and rambling, and bears the vibrations of a commune. People drift in and out, by car and on foot, and he waves to them all, while remaining seated on the steps.

The house is a positive statement by Marley. Opposite, there are some terrible new apartments which look like prison cells, and Bob continually laughs at the fact that they have bars up, protecting them from burglars. "No way to live, no way to live!" he keeps saying.

"Must run home like mind. Keep open."

Thus, Marley's home, Island House, in Hope Road, Kingston, is open to all-comers. Especially Rastafarians. As the Marley/Wailers success

gathers momentum, so their allegiance to Rastafarian principles becomes more concentrated. Every other sentence of Marley's speech is punctuated by a reference to Jah (God) and as he drew harder on his cigar-sized spliff (joint), repeating "Righteousness must cover the earth like the water cover the sea," I had visions of a sermon rather than a conversation, and certainly fading hopes of a lucid conversation.

And yet it's too easy to dismiss the obsession with Rasta as excluding their attachment to reality. It's impossible to catch, first time round, every word and nuance of what Marley is saying, but his drift is simple to understand, and while he keeps returning to his declarations that commercial gain is not his aim, he is acutely aware of all that's happening around him. His mind moves very quickly indeed, and his powers of observation are uncanny.

I asked him first about his evident need to smoke ganja (herb), of which he partakes a pound a week, and why the smoking of it was so dovetailed into his Rasta beliefs.

"Herb is healing of a nation," he said quietly. "When you smoke, you don't frighten so easy. Herb bring all brethren together, all thinking alike, and that's why they lock you up when you smoke herb, because it makes people think same way, but if people don't smoke herb they think different from each other, can be told what to do and get... confused.

"In Babylon we give thanks for herb, and if we didn't have herb to educate us, we be educated by fools who tell us to live like funny, like in Babylon. Herb is the healing of a nation, Bible say that. Herb come out of the ground!"

Did this contempt, then, for materialism and Babylon (Western culture) and even for organised society represent Black Power, and

against the system that teach you in live and die."

So his music existed for propaganda? He laughed at the seriousness of the word. "No, if God had-na given me a song to sing, I wouldn't have a song to sing. So it's not MY music, from my soul, doing these things, saying these words. I don't know about propaganda, but in telling truth, and I don't deal with the wrong things of life, and I don't want to know them, you... know them, and because you're not perfect you might try to change. Don't like the idea of propaganda, that's not how I-and-I see it. Don't deal with dark things."

And yet many of his songs, I said, were laced with stabs at various inequalities. "Bellyful", for example, was surely a commentary on the starvation of some as compared with the abundant wealth of others?

Not exactly, Marley answered. It was more subtle than that: "Your belly's full, but we're hungry for your LOVE of your brethren. Food's in your stomach, but cannot you see there is more to living than filling it? Where's the love for your brother?"

No, he averred, it wasn't entirely a materialistic commentary, more a sad declaration of the bankruptcy of believing that everything ended with self-gratification. But he was positively not playing a role. Asked if he felt any responsibility as the most popular star reggae had produced, he said: "I don't think about it, you know. Too busy working. People come to me, say, 'Bob Marley, big international artist' and I laugh. I don't know what that mean. If it mean more people listen, enjoy music, then good. That's all."

Still, he had been watching the adoption of reggae by others, and he liked Johnny Nash's "Stir It Up", a world hit version of the Marley song, and he was interested in other incursions into the style, mentioning Paul Simon's "Mother And Child Reunion" ("Nice").

"See, dem American players come down here and play with Jamaican musicians who are very friendly. Make good records. It happens all the time."

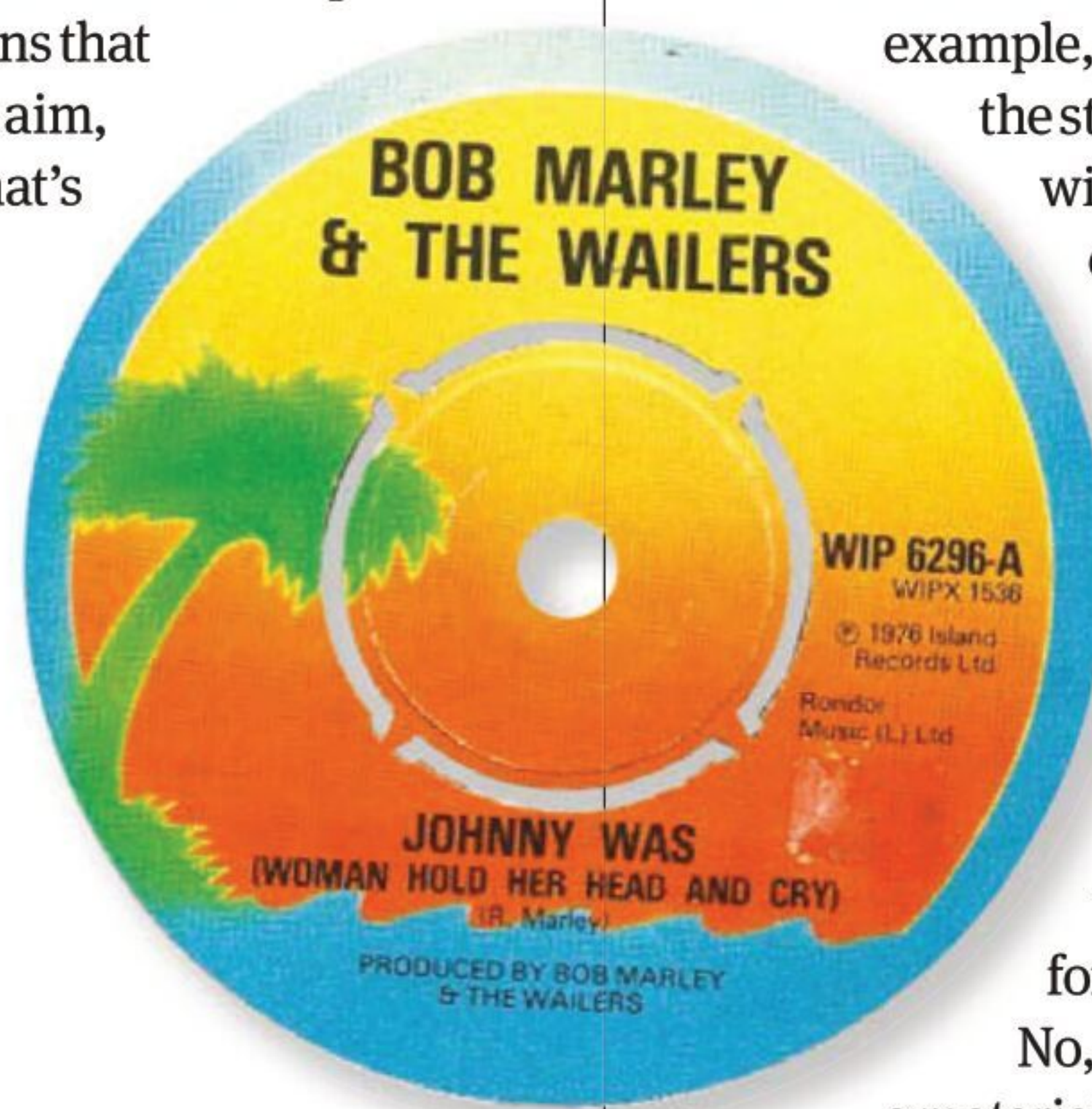
So there was no determination to keep reggae as a wholly private scene, and Jamaica was happy for the world to go into Kingston and join in?

"Nah, world cannot take it," Bob replied immediately. "This is one of them things the world cannot take. It's like gold is gold and silver is silver, and what is... imitation can be seen t'be imitation.

"So the real thing, nobody can take away from here. You have to really come in to this thing at our time to have the feel, y'know. It's art, y'know, art. Not just a purposeful thing, but from knowing. That's why I-and-I know nobody can take it. They can go anywhere and play funky and soul, but reggae – too hard, reggae. Must have a bond with it. The real reggae must come from Jamaica, because other people could not play it all the while, anyway – it would go against their whole life. Reggae has t'be... inside you."

Marley was now trying to define reggae music as clearly as possible, and the nearest he could get was to say it was like jazz.

"Jazz – a complete music," he declared, still



"THE REAL REGGAE MUST COME FROM JAMAICA"

BOB MARLEY

did Bob feel his music was preaching to white ears, or to blacks about whites?

"My music fight against the system. My music defend righteousness. If you're white and you're wrong, then you're wrong, if you're black and you're wrong, you're wrong. People are PEOPLE. Black, blue, pink, green – God make no rules where my people suffer and that why we must have redemption and redemption is now. Against white people? Couldn't say that. I fight



Bob Marley's home, Hope Road, Kingston, Jamaica

smoking. “Reggae complete, too. Reggae is funky, but it’s also different from funky, and sometimes I think funkysoul music goes little too far in what it tries to do. Reggae music is simple, all the while. Different from soul as well. Cannot be taught, that’s a fact.”

It relied on a mental attitude, he explained. If he was depressed and was going into a studio, he could not make music properly. But then, it might easily have something to do with the people and their vibrations. He felt – well, not uneasy in the company of non-Rastafarians, but not relaxed either. He wanted to stress, though, that there was no antipathy towards non-Rastas.

“Well, I say give a man a chance if he’s not Rasta. The Bible full of stories of people not treated right for not believing. Problem is not with people who are not in touch with Rasta, but with people who are once Rasta and then have left it and have to go back to it. These can be difficult and... confused people.”

Propaganda for Rastafarianism was something he admitted, if not for black repression.

Are you trying to make audiences outside Jamaica appreciate what Rastafarianism stands for?

“Yeh, mon, Rasta Man Vibration gonna cover the Earth! Jah say, until the philosophy which places one race superior and one race inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, then we won’t have no peace. Babylon believe in divide and rule, but Rasta one way only, the right way, and we can do it, but it take longer. We have redemption now, nobody can stop it.”

Marley said he read a chapter of the Bible every day, and based his belief on that, including his diet. He is a vegetarian, although that is not a prerequisite of Rastafarianism. He didn’t drink, he said, because it was obvious that pumping chemicals into his body would make him ill. “A little wine, sometimes,” he reflected.

“The reason people drink is because they want to feel how I feel when I smoke. Everybody need to get a little high sometimes, just that some people get high on the wrong thing. Herb does grow. How much do I smoke? Plenty.”

Could someone be a Rasta and not smoke?

“Yeh... but if you believe in Rasta and fight against the herb, you are wrong. Herb needs to be understood properly, but, in hands of Rasta, it is the healing of a nation.”

Smoking is highly illegal in Jamaica, however, and Marley repeats his view that society is frightened of people thinking the same way.

“Vampires!” he roared. “Most people are negative out there, but Rasta people think positive. Most people in Babylon want power. Devil want power. God don’t want power, but Devil need power, ’cos Devil insecure.”

Insecurity never bothered him. Even when he travelled outside Jamaica, he remained confident, secure, positive. The only country he would contemplate settling in, except Jamaica, was Africa – this was naturally bound up with his Rasta convictions – but even without the prospect of settling there, he planned a trip there soon.

Friends say they dread the day Marley goes there, because he’s such a highly charged, sensitive man that it is bound to change his entire attitude, one way or the other, towards his beliefs.

He said the system taught people that they must live and die, but he and his brethren did not agree. Furthermore, they were totally opposed to the worshipping of material goods to the point where people in “Babylon” (Bob’s all-embracing word for the centre of the world’s problems) died working ➤



Bob Marley & The Wailers live in 1976

for material objects which would do nothing to enrich their lives.

It wasn't that he personally renounced materially useful things: bicycles, cars were OK in the Rasta creed, but they were merely a means to an end.

"If somebody gave me a spaceship, I would give it back to him because I could not use it," Marley continued.

He pointed to that ugly block of new houses opposite, and laughed sadly.

"Those people over there are working to live in a situation not good, but the system educated them to think that is the end of their life," he said. "People not taught to be at peace with themselves. Education all wrong. Put you in a bracket where you earn enough money to pay for THESE things!" (He pointed at the houses again.)

"Well, you have to be a Rasta man to beat the system, and when they can get a Rasta man in jail, they do, and then they try to get you back there. Everyone wants the biggest car, refrigerator, crazy mon – this is the system I keep talking about..."

He started to sing "Rat Race".

What about the race for the title of the biggest reggae band in the world then? Did he concede such a contest existed?

"Can't say that," he answered, convincingly. "I-and-I, and my brethren, only answer to myself and to Jah. If de Wailers are in some race, we must have been put there by somebody, but not us."

How about the future of the band, Bob? Does it plan to change, progress in any foreseeable way?

"When I feel that the job has been done that I-and-I have been sent to do, I-and-I pack it up," he stated firmly. When would that be? "When I feel satisfied and when Jah tells me I am finished with

this work. It might be at the end of the American visit, or the English visit – I will know that when as many people as possible have learned what we have to say."

When the system is challenged?

"System bound to go," he answered.

The personal manager of Bob Marley is Jamaican-born Don Taylor, who has worked with Tamla Motown in Detroit, and especially closely with Marvin Gaye, Little Anthony, Martha Reeves and Chuck Jackson. He's managed Marley for a year, and says he was warned against taking on Bob by locals who described Marley as a "problem, difficult character".

"What you must remember," said Taylor one day as he contemplated the escalating Marley story yet again, "is that Bob's sharper than all of us. Right now, he's getting to the position he was in 10 years ago of not trusting people, and that's a pity. Lots of people hang around the studios, for instance, saying they are broke and asking him for 10 dollars just like they used to. He always used to give friends dollars if they needed it, but now the whole world seems to be joining in.

"Maybe it's because there's jealousy in this town because Bob's the one who made it, and people are out to take him for a ride. This is real bad, y'know – they should realise that he's made it possible for everyone to make it. Instead, people are talking behind his back and speaking all this crap about selling out. Listen, the same guys who knew Marley when he was in Trenchtown are talking behind his back now, and it's sickening..."

Bob Marley, he declared, knew all about the rats and the roaches of Trenchtown living. "He also knows all those old slogans about no money,

no jobs, no future. Well, Marley's giving them a future."

Flying out of Kingston next day aboard Air Jamaica, I asked the hostess her views on reggae, Rastafarianism, and Bob Marley. She was about 23, a black Jamaican.

"Rastafarianism? Oh, it's quite popular but only among the very young here. I don't think reggae will ever catch on much. It's really dance music for the young. What would you like to drink?"

RAY COLEMAN



IT'S frequently said that no single artist has yet captured the flagging spirit of the '70s. Led Zeppelin and heavy metal, singer-songwriters by the score, middle-of-the-road demons like The Carpenters, soft rock, folk rock, jazz rock, electronic rock, glam rock, sham rock and The Chieftains – it's all valid and

honest and worthy and good of its kind. But it's true to say that no one solitary force has erupted which can be accurately described as reflecting the heart of the '70s in a meaningful fashion, like The Beatles did with the '60s.

The single star who comes nearest to it is Bob Marley. This is partly because his concerts are actual events as important for the occasion as for the music he so powerfully projects – and partly because, by virtue of the fact that he's black and sings the blues of the '70s, he's capturing the heat of the times.

The man has a hypnotic magnetism, and it's the sure sign of a giant when it scarcely matters that the

quality of his music is occasionally rough. What counts is solely that he's up there, delivering and communicating.

For too long, it seems to me, contemporary music has failed to emphasise the emotional rapport essential between an artist and the audience. Bob Marley & The Wailers, during their concerts at Hammersmith Odeon, London, last week, had that rare aura of familiarity and warmth and heart and presence.

"Feel The Vibes" said the notice outside the Odeon, and inside, the Rastaman's vibrations were powerful indeed. "Let peace and love abide in this house," said Marley as he took the stage, flanked by congas draped in the Ethiopian colours of green, yellow and orange and, atop the stage, a flag of the same persuasion bearing a portrait of the Rastafarians' idol, Haile Selassie.

Audiences were very mixed in colour, but white or black, all were instantly caught up in the intensity of the event. Today, of course, Marley is more politically committed to the

black 'redemption' cause than he was a year ago when he played that very special gig at the Lyceum, London. Everyone at the Hammersmith gigs last week seemed peculiarly aware of the seriousness of Bob Marley & The Wailers' stance.

He came out, singing "Trenchtown Rock", and we were away, as those deceptively simple rhythms gripped an audience which immediately abandoned its seats and took to the floor or, like me, stood on seats for a better view. "One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain," sang Marley, and his message was accepted.

The Odeon, a venue as cold as this music is hot, often eats artists alive, because it is impossible for them to radiate much from the invisible barrier erected by the stage. Yet within seconds, Marley had done it – completely enveloped his audience and commanded the entire theatre. It was a remarkable achievement.

What was equally surprising was the speed with which he raced through his songs. "Ras-ta-far-i!" he exclaimed after the first song, and the crowd roared back approvingly as he sailed in to: "This morning I woke up in the curfew... How many rivers to cross before we talk to the boss..." ("Burnin' And Lootin'").

All Marley's songs have these cryptic dashes of pure demonic fury, so that even when you're unaware of the complete storyline, it's easy to catch the mood. Furthermore, Marley is now concentrating more heavily on animation and theatrics. He may dress meanly, in red T-shirt and ordinary denims, but his outstretched arms, with hands across face in desperation, clenched eyes, finger-pointing to the extreme to stab home a point – all these characteristics are, if not rehearsed, at

least statements of intent. Bob is now working hard to get across his lines, every bit as seriously as a professional actor.

Head held back, he launched into "Them Belly Full", a reminder that most of his songs stand up as anthems in themselves; the lead guitar solo here, from Donald Kinsey, was a killer. Throughout the concerts, Kinsey impressed with guitar licks that absolutely flew, but raced away with their understated control rather than dabble into that head-strong philosophy of the desperate rocker.

On "I Shot The Sheriff", Marley's enunciation was fascinating. He rode far away from the Eric Clapton version, relying more on the potency of the lyrics than Clapton, who took the song up the chart on the crest of its rhythm.

Here, his arm-waving as he spat out "...but I didn't shoot the deputy" was immaculately timed, and the back-up vocals of the I Threes was an object lesson in restraint and taste.

(A word about the I Threes. They're Marcia Griffiths, Judy Mowatt and Rita Marley. Not only do they look majestic in flowing white and Ethiopian flashes, they deliver back-up vocal shots in honeyed tones. As always with the greatest of artistry, it's what they leave out, and where they

clapping by the I Threes in mid-song was really something. It's the little things that count...

And so it went: "Lively Up Yourself", "Roots, Rock, Reggae" with the I Threes' glorious counterpoint to Marley's voice, and the crowd really loving the line, "You know, Mister, music sure sound good to me!"

Whether by planning or accident, Marley's encore was devoted to his political slants. "Rastaman Vibration", "Rat Race", and a lengthy "Get Up, Stand Up", perhaps his hottest song, all demonstrated what an immensely powerful repertoire The Wailers now have. I thought they had used up too many of the goodies to encore with anything significant, but how wrong can you be!

Here, Marley delivered his speech in the form of the words of Haile Selassie: "Until the philosophy where one race stay superior and the other inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, there will be no peace..."

Dancing off the stage, as he had done several times that night, he had assumed the mantle of a finely honed artist. It may well have seemed a long way from Trenchtown, and he may be spouting songs from a safe vantage point which irritates some of his brethren – but at least he is DOING it.

For his final London show last Friday, before the band took off for its provincial tour, Marley was in even more joyous mood than on the opening show.

Dancing around the stage, arms and dreadlocks flailing as if he had been choreographed, he looked and sounded physically tired and mentally high enough to carry him through. "I Shot The Sheriff" and "No Woman, No Cry" were again the musical and spiritual peaks, and by this show the I Threes had added short but cute individual dances to the start of several of the songs.

Again the audience was politically receptive, especially wailing when Bob sang, "We build your penitentiaries/We build your schools..." (during the glaringly anti-Capitalist song "Want More"). What of the music? Economy is the strength of Marley and the Wailers' sound. Aston Barrett's bass, Earl Chinna Smith's rhythm guitar, Carlton Barrett's tasteful drums, and the percussion work of Alvin Seeco Patterson combine for a lift-off which doesn't rely on volume at all but, through the insistence of the beat and heartbeat of the music, makes for intoxication after a couple of minutes.

Marley and the Wailers grab you by the gullet and refuse to compromise. No other artist speaks for the time so eloquently, and the pure honesty of purpose is like a breath of fresh air in a scene recently dominated by business motives.

Marley may well be the pawn in a Rasta chess game – woolly hats bearing the Rasta colours, posters and T-shirts are on sale at concerts, so the marketing of a cult has certainly taken hold.

Whether that's a good or bad thing for the music's future is debatable, but the momentum would seem to be unstoppable. For the moment, though, Bob Marley & The Wailers are the leaders, the most potent voice to erupt into the contemporary music arena within the past six years. And Marley himself is a terrific artist, full of nervous intensity, delivering the goods spectacularly, with a wealth of hot music that can chill the spine like few other events in recent years. All this, and he has his finger on the mood of a generation, too. Who could ask more?

RAY COLEMAN

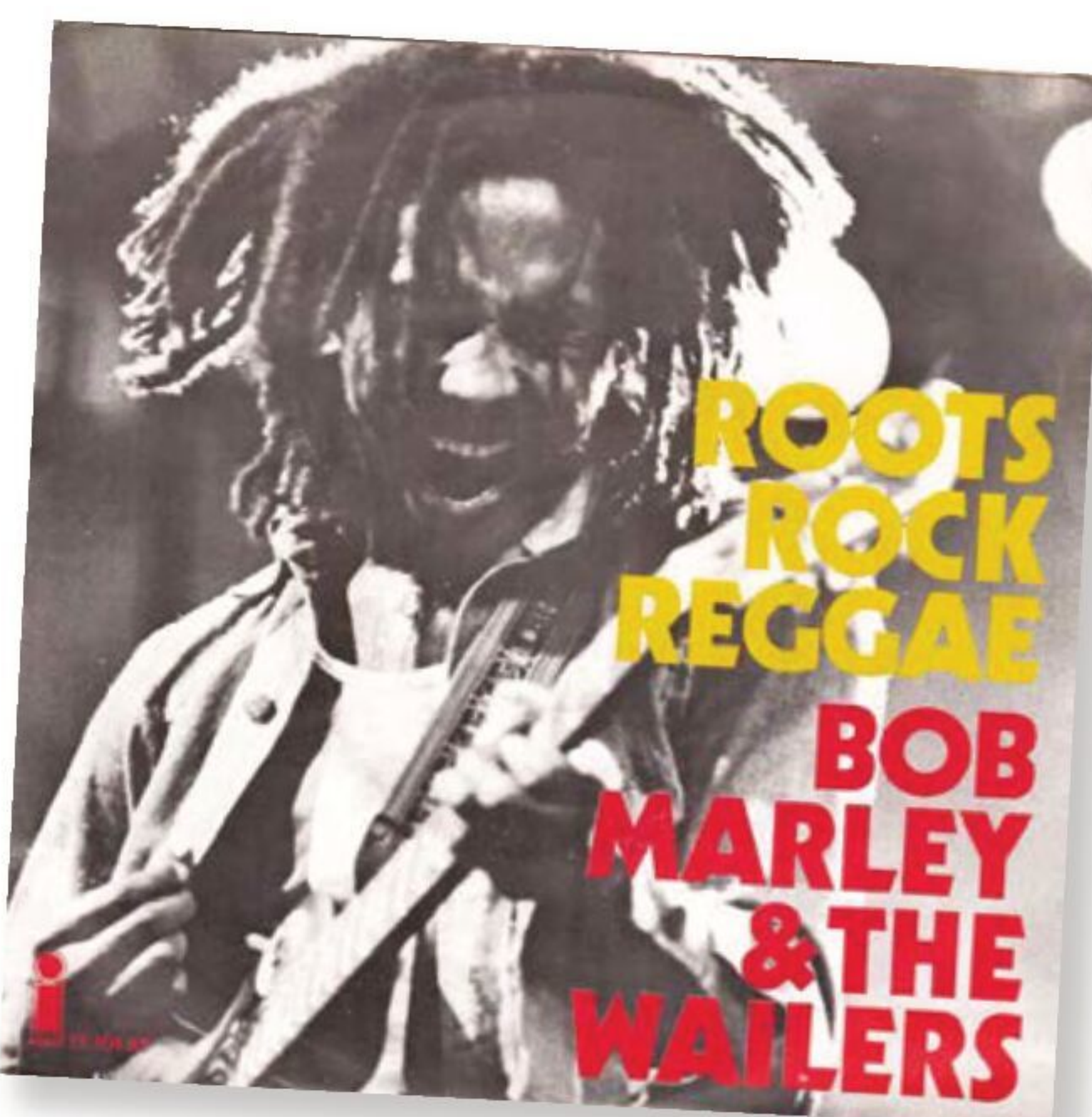
"I WILL PACK IT UP WHEN JAH TELLS ME I AM FINISHED"

BOB MARLEY

choose to join the show, that's so special. Their cohesion and timing was a pure joy.)

"Reflexes got the better of me/What is to be must be," sang Marley, hand over face, pointing his hand to the audience. And next, on "Want More", his hand regularly covering his face as he delivered the words: "They stab you in the back/After you get what you want, do you want more?"

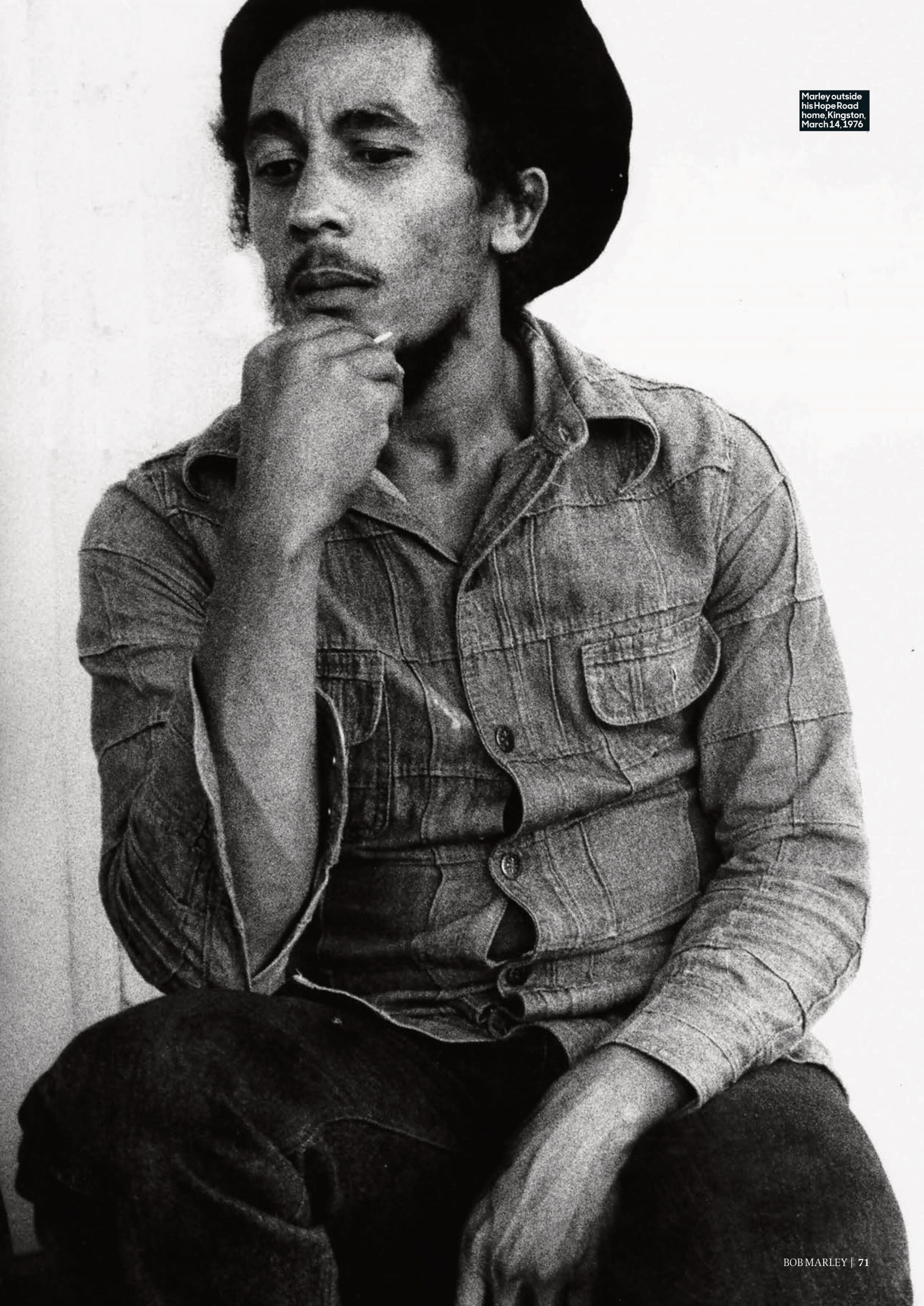
The bloodcurdling organ of Tyrone Downie announced the classic "No Woman, No Cry", and although nothing can eclipse the memory of this particular song at the Lyceum last year, Marley did it OK. The audience chanted "Everything's gonna be all right," along with the song, and the simple act of



**“Super-sensitive.
Amazingly bright.
A natural leader.”**

As Jamaican artists become increasingly exploited by the music business, Island’s **CHRIS BLACKWELL** is a more empathetic – and more successful – label boss: “Blackwell do good for reggae. Do much to encourage musicians, and no bad deals,” says Bob Marley. In Kingston, **RAY COLEMAN** learns all about Blackwell’s relationship with Marley – and what might happen next for reggae’s biggest star. “He will,” predicts Blackwell, “be bigger than Hendrix.”

Marley outside
his Hope Road
home, Kingston,
March 14, 1976





MELODY MAKER
12/6/1976

MOVING around reggae circles in Kingston, Jamaica, it's easy to sense uneasiness about the commercial bandwagon to which some of the music is hitched. There's generally delight that Bob Marley has 'made it', but still a suspicion that musicians had better be wary of opportunistic record businessmen from America and Britain, who see the music as a current fad, to be exploited quickly and then dropped just as speedily when all the dollars have been drained off.

Such is the love and dedication of many of the players that they are loathe to sign anything. The rumours of rip-offs are to be heard everywhere, and 'trust' is not a word uttered anywhere. The attitude is understandable, yet also self-defeating, because the very thing wanted by musicians who know full well that they have 'it' is, indeed, commercial success and international recognition.

What they all seek to help them, therefore, is that rare animal, a combination between genuine fan and shrewd businessman. Someone who can exercise discretion in weighing up the music, who can bring a little, say, taste into the business end.

Chris Blackwell has these attributes. He's head of Island Records. His name will be identified by all reggae fanciers, not only as the producer of much of Bob Marley's work, but also as a projector of JA music since its days of pure novelty value.

When Millie's "My Boy Lollipop" was a smash hit in 1964, Blackwell – a white Jamaican who had arrived in London two years earlier – ran the Sue label. (Incidentally, it was on Blackwell's classy little Sue operation that The Beatles originally planned to model Apple: "Small and funky, just like Sue," George Harrison once told me.)

Blackwell had grown up in Jamaica subconsciously realising the fermenting musical culture, but not until he reached Britain did he fully appreciate the long-range potential for the music.

Today, he is acknowledged as a sort of father figure of reggae's success; living testimony, perhaps, to the idealism inherent in all musicians that they can have their cake and eat it. In Blackwell, art meets money and survives.

Curiously enough, Blackwell did not know Marley when the two men lived in Jamaica. Chris had heard of Bob, but not until 1971 did Blackwell make contact with him, when both were in London.

Together, they've forged a kind of musical revolution since a first meeting at Island's Basing Street studios, and their rapport now is complete. Talking to each man separately, one becomes aware of a peculiar relationship of trust, yet not of warmth. Blackwell has masterminded an incredible operation which has hoisted Marley to the top of the reggae tree, so that now he is faced with the inevitable question of: which way now and how do we face a future even trickier than the past, artistically speaking?

Marley, however, though not a man to emit emotion with much candour, was laying himself on the line, by his own standards, when he said to me without any prompting: "Chris Blackwell do good for reggae. Do much to encourage musicians, and no bad deals."

Blackwell jet-hops round the world these days, but the Blackwell in swimming trunks drinking lime juice at the poolside of a Kingston hotel is

"REGGAE MUSICIANS FEEL OSTRACISED BY SOCIETY"

CHRIS BLACKWELL

and a large part of the early relationship was based on my need to eliminate his mistrust and lack of understanding of what I was planning. I know this will sound like I'm believing in my own publicity, but the fact is that that assurance for Bob could not have come from just anybody. If I had not been Jamaican, with some sort of knowledge of the local situation, I don't honestly believe any other company could have come along and got the same results."

Exactly what was it, then, that clinched your relationship and made it work, bearing in mind Marley's suspicions? I like to think that Bob Marley came to us and stayed with us because he and his band could see we loved their music, believed in them and, most important, would stay with them. I mean, Island has invested over \$200,000 in the band, so that's some act of faith.

Reggae artists are not used to that level of money, quite naturally, and the difficult thing is that they sometimes tend to equate the amount of space they get, say, in the *Melody Maker* with the amount of money they should be getting.

For example, David Bowie might get a full-page article, and a reggae artist who has not earned any money might also get a full-page article for musical reasons, rather than commercial reasons, and straight away the reggae musician will say something like: "Hey, where are my royalties for 100,000 sales?"

So unless you're *really* sure, you can end up giving them advances or paying them royalties for records that will never be sold. It's a very delicate business, but sometimes when you are convinced, you just have to give a lot of money to convince them you know and believe, and that's what I did with Bob Marley. I knew it was going to happen eventually. It's a weird way to work, and hard for the accounts department, but it's about music, and music cannot always be defined in purely logical terms."

Do you see your personal role as the music business' populariser of reggae? Did you feel evangelical about it years ago, or do you feel that way now? No, not at all, I love it. I understand it well, always have done, I think, and I'm able to help it along at this important time because I also know the rock'n'roll side of the business. So far, I've been the person most able to – well, put it across. But I think a lot more people will come into it.

Do you think this is reggae's beginning rather than the middle part? I think it's the beginning, but I hope the beginning really gets started, because at the moment the scene has a crazy-ish feel to it, which is very dangerous. It would be terrible if the people who are very good don't get a chance to come out before reggae as a subject becomes written off.

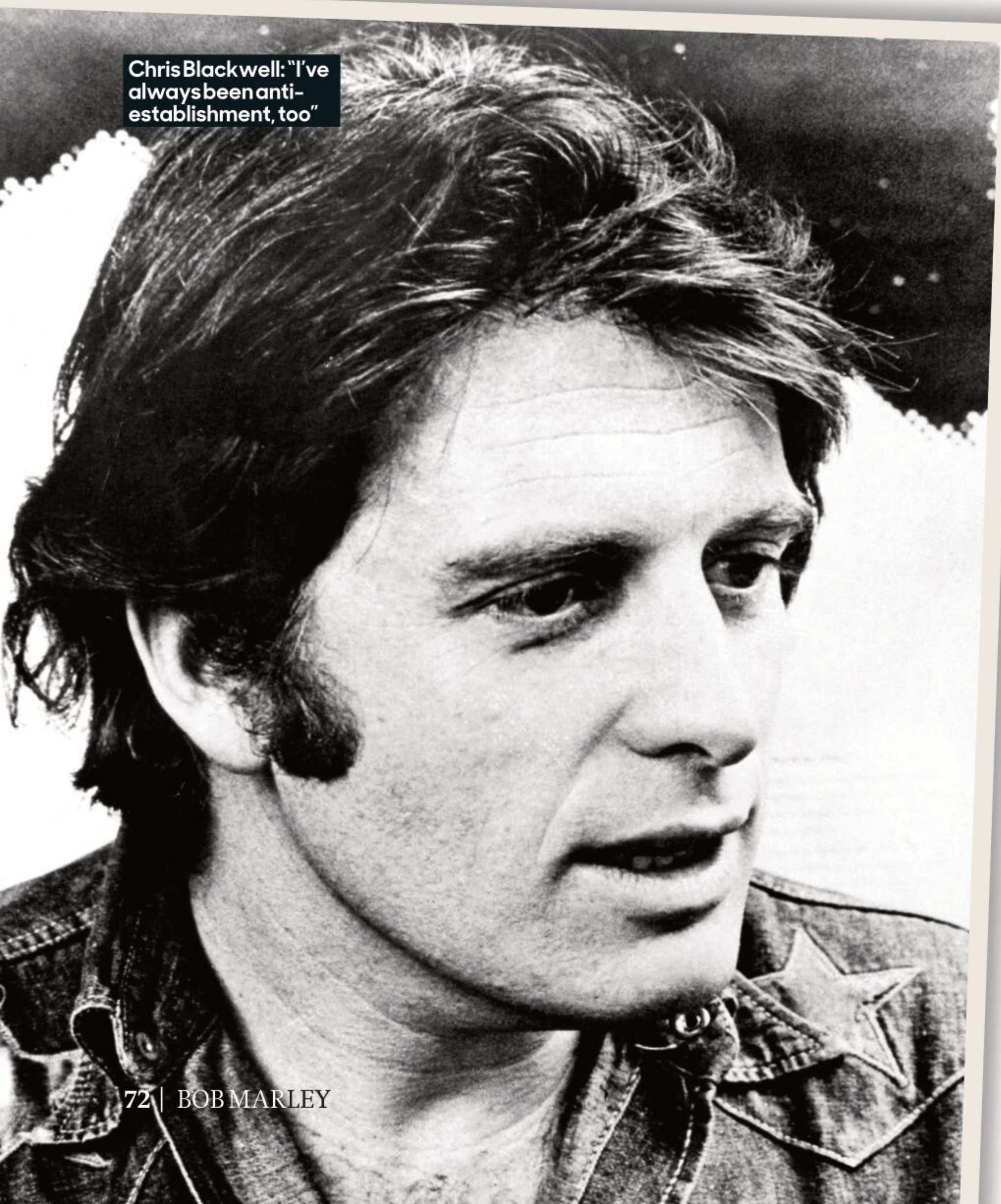
And how do you view other record companies' activities in reggae? Well, it depends on who they are and what they do. I certainly welcome a CBS or an Atlantic or an A&M or a Warner Brothers coming into reggae if they would really get behind and promote whichever artist they sign. And the small basic reggae labels which have always existed in England play a very important part in exposing all the, as it were, unknown artists. I agree with any record company that tries to do

different from the man of action in bigger cities.

Yes, he agrees – he feels relaxed and at home here in Kingston, even though nowadays it feels rather heady returning to such teeming intensity. When he lived here, there was scarcely any local scene, which was precisely the reason he left. Now, the town is awash with music, and he was proud of what his company had achieved with Marley. "He will be bigger than Hendrix," he declares.

Do you feel Marley would have warmed to you and to Island Records if you had not been a Jamaican? I think it goes round the other way. In many cases, a record company does not, or even cannot, add a lot to an act's long-term future, but I know that in this case I was able to communicate with Bob

Chris Blackwell: "I've always been anti-establishment, too"





a job, get behind the artists to whom they should be committed. I only get angry with labels that pick up, or go towards something, because they feel it's the rage, and they plan to throw out reggae as 'releases' with the rest of the regular rock albums.

Do you feel you have changed or diluted Bob Marley & The Wailers' music in order to get a bigger audience? Not diluted, no, I don't. The thing people must realise about Bob Marley & The Wailers is that they could never be persuaded to do anything they did not believe in, so there is no sense in which I, or they, could properly be accused of manipulation of the musicians or the public.

On *Catch A Fire*, I deliberately tried to put something into it which I felt they could relate to, with rock mixes rather than reggae mixes, and the bass heavier upfront and more things happening on top. I tried to get from the musicians something that was basically there anyway, but wasn't coming out. That's what a producer exists for.

What did Marley and the others think of your attitude, which must have been motivated by a commercial ear? They were very happy with it. But it wasn't a 'let's-get-success' move, just a natural progression. *Catch A Fire* was not a commercially successful album, wasn't considered rootsy enough, perhaps.

Did you sense with that album that certain purists would say Marley was heading towards 'selling out'? Sort of, yes. You always get that

backlash of feeling when an artist has a kind of – well, destiny. But I'm quite happy even looking back on what happened, because what needed to be done was done.

When it says on an album, 'Produced by Chris Blackwell and the Wailers', what does that precisely mean? Well, for example, on *Catch A Fire*, with all the tracks recorded in Jamaica, I wasn't here. They were produced by the Wailers themselves. Then Bob Marley came to England with the tracks and in England what we did together was put on the other instruments – lead guitar on some things, Moog here, organ on other things. Then I would actually mix it with Bob. On the second album, almost all the stuff was done in Jamaica, but overdubbed in England, and we were all together again, mixing and remixing. My production involvements include perhaps extending a track, saying this track is really good, maybe we should put more colour into it, do it again, maybe. But now, as always, the basic roots of the music have always rested with Bob Marley & The Wailers. On this latest LP, they've done all the stuff.

Did you envisage in your early associations with reggae its influence on the mainstream of popular music, with the adoption of the style by Paul Simon, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder? I do know that when I first signed The Wailers, what I wanted to do urgently was get their records to musicians. Because I really felt the correct way to break them would be by getting them

respected among other players. The musicians were so unusually strong, instrumentally, that I fully expected other artists to get as hung up as I had become on basslines, things like that. Often a musician would say, well, ah, it needs to have something *more* going, you know. It's loud and boring. But I'd have to argue that that's not the music, really, it's a controlled sort of sound."

In those early days, and we're only talking of say four years ago, were you aware of the political stance of the music? It was impossible, as a Jamaican, to be unaware of it.

Do you see the strength of the music today as in its message rather than as dance music? If you are a black Jamaican and you come from Trenchtown, or if your friends come from Trenchtown, and you are writing your own songs and producing reggae music, the natural source of your music is your environment. Reggae musicians here feel ostracised by society at large. It's still very much underground music, really. We all know that Bob Marley & The Wailers are huge, but it hasn't got through on every level out here.

Do you agree with Bob Marley that many reggae musicians have been exploited by record businessmen? Yes, the rip-off stories are often true, but there is a side to the early stages in a career, when an artist claims to have been ripped off, that bears thinking about. For instance, let's take the case of (Blackwell names local



Bob lays back at the Plaza Hotel, NYC, 1976

producer). I talked yesterday to a musician who pointed out that it was a kind of school everyone went to, and everyone claims that he ripped people off, recorded them, made lots of money, then moved on to the next musician. But as a recording operation, it should be regarded exactly as a school in which the musician can learn. You went there, didn't pay anything to learn, didn't get paid anything to write million-selling tunes or whatever. The musician did his session, and good luck, in a way, to the producer if he had a hit. The producer wasn't behaving as a conscious rip-off merchant, but operating in his own little sphere on a certain basis, where supply and demand was turned around. He wasn't a hard-headed businessman, and he didn't say, "OK, sign here for five years." Everybody left him, but it's worth remembering that they could leave. There was no contract. It was kind of a useful workshop. Some people might call that a rip-off, but on reflection, musicians gained something, too.

Nevertheless, Marley seems to regard you quietly as some kind of saviour who's come along and wiped the slate clean, making it possible for him and other musicians to achieve some credibility. Does that weigh heavily on your shoulder? Well, it's a bit weird. It's just that the business here has been so much like the early R&B. I feel that Island has been rather like Atlantic which, if you remember, was the only company to build artists. Other labels just cut tunes. If it was a hit, great! Didn't matter who sang it! That used to be the system. Here, I've always been more interested in artists than records. We take on artists not just for their first album or single, but for their future.

With the general feeling among reggae purists that reggae has or might soon sell-out, exactly what do you think the musicians can do to counteract against that possibility? I think the musicians generally feel so strong today, and they must know that what they have is what is wanted, that I can't see it possible they will get dumped by anybody, if you see what I mean. These people have a lot to offer today. It boils down to really caring for artists: when I gave Bob Marley & The Wailers that first cash advance to go and make an album, people said I was mad and I could kiss goodbye to it. They reckoned I'd get a call from Jamaica saying they'd finished three tracks and run out of money, end of story. I don't want to sound too clever about all this, but it's always a mistake to underestimate artists.

How convinced were you, on that first meeting with Marley, of any charisma attached to the

man? Right from the start, when he walked into my office above the Basing Street studios. It wasn't apparent in his other two musicians at the time, though it is now, but at that moment I realised he has a special... presence."

As a Jamaican, do you feel mentally at one with the music, that this is my country's sound and the arrival of a giant star like Marley is a kind of nationalistic triumph for you? Well, I definitely feel it's the music of Jamaica. If only the people in society at large here would realise it! It's original and it's going to spread everywhere and certainly I feel a pride. I'm really pleased to have something to do with it. But it really is absurd that you can't hear a note of reggae music in this hotel, except on the radio occasionally. It's going to break here, though, this year, above ground. When I left Jamaica in 1962, the biggest-selling album in Jamaica ever was *The Student Prince* by Mario Lanza, and to be an intellectual music lover was to tune in to Andy Williams. It takes a long, long time to change public taste really drastically.

Have you ever had a serious argument with Marley? No, and I don't think we'd ever really have one. I think it's more than possible that at some time we might part, Bob and Island, because it's in the nature of a small independent company that when a contract expires, an artist on the way up goes to an RCA or a CBS or wherever, because often, though not in all cases, the artist can get a deal rather like one might get from an insurance company. And when they start talking that sort of money against a company like Island, which is not a public company – well, you see the problem.

Does that prospect make you despair? Yes. But there is no way out of it.

Finally, let's go back to Marley the man. What kind of person do you see in him? Super-sensitive, amazingly bright, takes in a lot of things right to the back of his head. He's a natural leader, and he has some very, very heavy people around him – when I say heavy, I mean in the sense that they're very bright, very intelligent and talented.

And it says a lot for him that they acknowledge him as their leader, because they are all very strong people in their own right. Basically, the attitude of Bob and the Wailers has always been that they would, on their terms, like to expand their music.

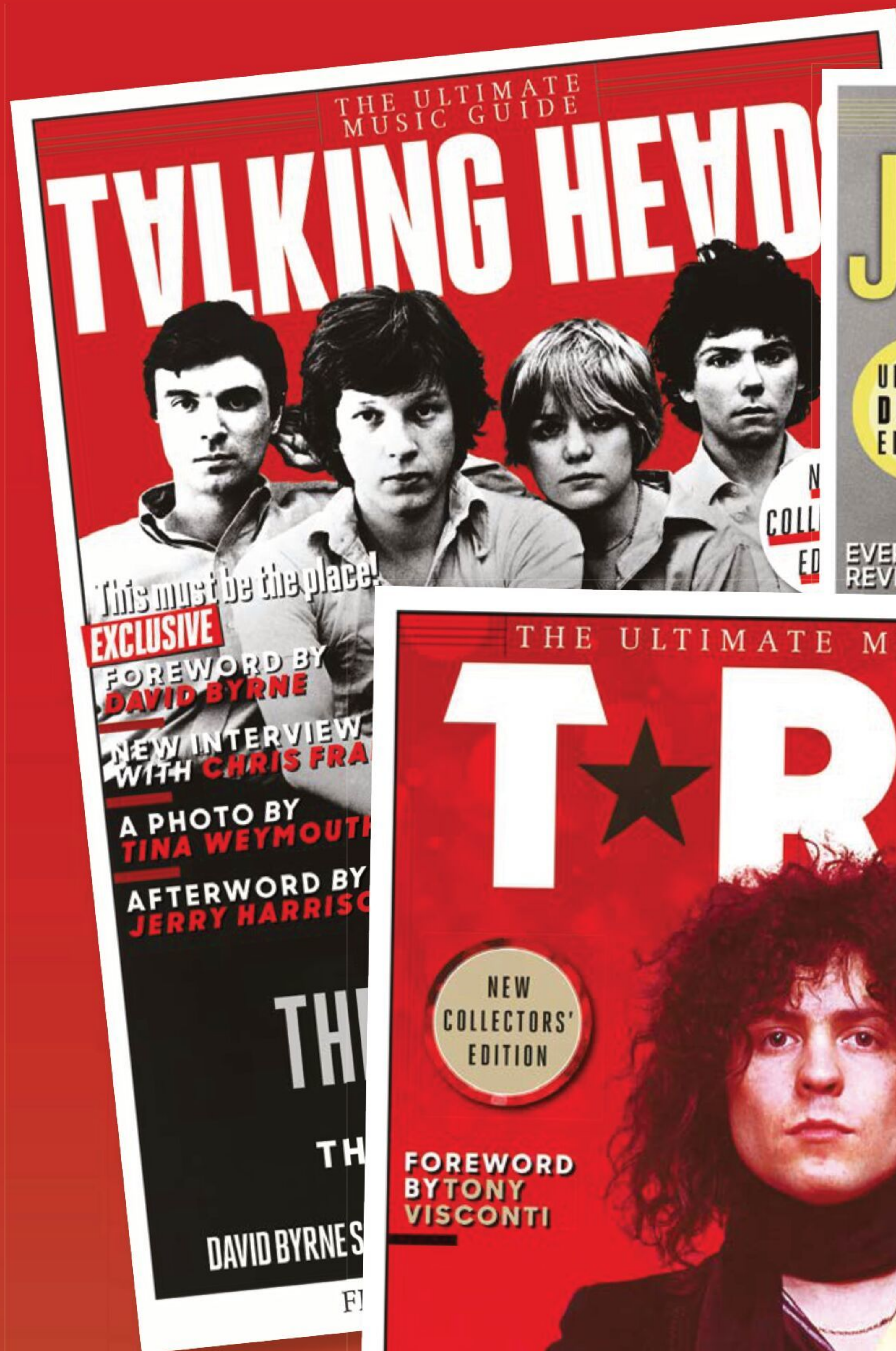
They had their own little shop here even when I knew them at first, and when they wanted some money they'd go and make a few records and sell them themselves. So they've always been a very independent crowd, the Wailers.

As a non-Rastafarian, how do you manage to get such closeness with Jamaican musicians? I don't participate in the Rasta thing, but what I know about it, I like. There's a general attitude of anti-establishment about it that I appreciate and go along with. Musicians are traditionally anti-establishment, and I guess I always have been, too. 🗨️



The mixing console, Studio 1, Basing Street, July 1974

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**"Bob set up
his rasta
camp here"**



Bob Marley at the "Is This Love" videoshoot, Keskidee Centre, Islington, London, 1977

Bob Marley's momentous 1977 began under the shadow of an attempted assassination and a flight to the UK. During a year spent living in London in exile, Marley entered an extraordinarily creative phase, recording two landmark albums – *Exodus* and *Kaya* – that transformed him into a reggae superstar. "It was an amazing time," one collaborator tells **GRAEME THOMSON**. "Everything was happening all at once."



IF THERE IS a single day that captures the extremes of the extraordinary year Bob Marley spent in exile in London, it occurs in the autumn of 1977 at the Keskidee Centre, an Afro-Caribbean community hub in Islington. Marley is there to make the video for “Is This Love”, as yet unreleased but destined to become the latest in a line of Top 10 hits.

The filming takes place at a children’s birthday party, at which one of the guests is the eight-year-old future supermodel Naomi Campbell. Marley jigs and japes merrily for the camera, every inch the family-friendly entertainer. Behind the scenes in the converted church, meanwhile, he presides over a council of war. In the wake of a peace treaty recently brokered on the Caribbean island, several Jamaican dons have flown to London to persuade Marley to return home, following the assassination attempt in December 1976 that led to him seeking refuge in England.

“The two sides of all the gangsters in Jamaica came over,” recalls Marley’s great friend and mentor Chris Blackwell, who signed him to Island Records in 1972. “Bob knew all of them because he was based in a really rough part of Kingston. They wanted him to go back over to do the One Love concert.” For Marley, contemplating the offer involved confronting some raw emotions.

“He didn’t talk about the shooting much, but he was very upset that people would come to shoot him,” says Blackwell. “Bob wasn’t at all someone who

was boastful or thought he was the greatest thing ever – he was a very natural person – but I think he was shocked that people would want to shoot him, and it took him a while to work through that.”

The reggae superstar had chosen to deal with the fallout from the shooting in London, where his recent brush with mortality infused his life and music with a new sense of purpose. On the one hand, it was business as usual. “Bob set up his Rasta camp here,” says Don Letts, at the time a budding DJ, entrepreneur and “baby dread” who was befriended by Marley. “It was like he had picked up a bit of Kingston and transplanted it to Chelsea.” The cultural exchange worked both ways, however. In London, Marley integrated with young punks and Rastas, visited West End nightclubs and dingy shebeens, played football in his local park, recorded with his wife, conceived a son with his girlfriend, and fell prey to the injury that eventually led to his death four years later. “It was an amazing time,” says Marcia Griffiths, a member of his vocal group, The I-Threes. “Everything was happening all at once.”

The duality of Marley’s year in exile is most clearly reflected in the music he created during that time. In London he made two albums, *Exodus* and *Kaya*, in a matter of months. They feature some of his deepest and most spiritually resonant music, from the lowering “Natural Mystic” to the declamatory “Exodus”. Yet it was also the year in

which Marley recorded the songs that transformed him from a roots reggae star to a pop pin-up. “Three Little Birds”, “One Love”, “Jamming”, “Waiting In Vain” and “Is This Love?” were all released during this remarkably fertile period. “He was sending messages to the world,” says Griffiths. “Those two albums cover everything.”

At the heart of it all is *Exodus*, perhaps Marley’s most ambitious and universal statement. “It was very advanced, very progressive – almost futuristic,” says his eldest son Ziggy, who remastered the album in 2017. “*Exodus* took reggae to the next level in terms of instrumentation, beats and musicianship. It made reggae a more international and accessible thing, with elements people could relate to in their world.” Blackwell puts it more succinctly: “*Exodus* was a huge record for Island – and a revolutionary record for reggae.”

MARLEY ARRIVED IN London in early January 1977, shortly before turning 32, following the most tumultuous few weeks of his life. On December 3, two days before he had been due to perform at the Smile Jamaica concert, seven

gunmen entered his compound at 56 Hope Road in Kingston. Marley was shot in the chest and the arm but escaped without serious injury. His wife, Rita, was shot in the head, though miraculously she made a full recovery, while his manager, Don Taylor, was struck in the legs and body.

Immediately after the shooting, recalls Chris Blackwell, “Bob went up to a place I had in the hills behind Kingston called Strawberry Hill. He was there for two or three days, and then he went down and did the concert – which everybody told him not to do, but he did anyway.”

Emerging from a praetorian guard of dreads, and with his would-be killers still at large, Marley was spirited from the hills to perform at the huge open-air concert on December 5, unbuttoning his shirt while he sang to flaunt his bullet wounds. “We didn’t worry about our safety,” recalls Wailers bassist Aston “Family Man” Barrett. “Our people worry but not we. Jah protect. I was surprised a little by the shooting, but the show had to go on.”

Perhaps, but Jamaica was no longer safe for Marley. In the hours following the concert, he was flown to the Bahamas in Blackwell’s private plane, accompanied only by two pilots and his close friend, The Wailers’ designer, Neville Garrick. “I escaped with him at 6.30 in the morning,” says Garrick. “I had a passport, a pair of jeans and a couple of T-shirts in a brown paper bag. Bob had about the same.” On landing, Marley was asked if he was seeking political asylum. “Me just having a vacation,” he replied, which was not quite the case. The trip to Nassau in the small hours of December 6 was the beginning of more than a year of exile. He didn’t set foot in Jamaica again until February 1978.

In Nassau, Marley and Garrick stayed at Blackwell’s guest house. In the coming days, his wife and children and members of the band joined him. “We had a pretty rough Christmas, analysing everything,” says Garrick. “Bob started writing immediately.”

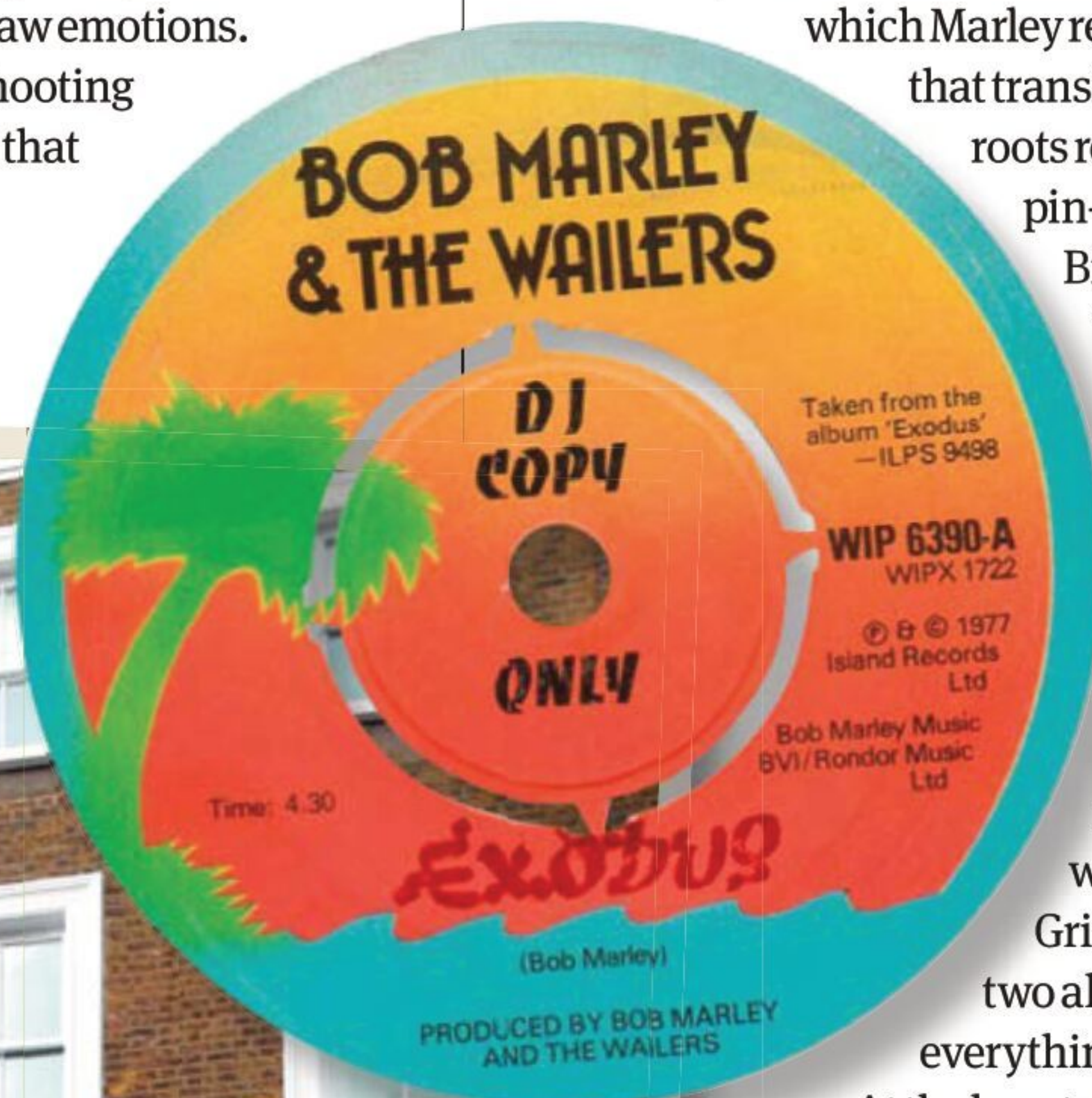
Working just with an acoustic guitar, Marley came up with several new songs, among them “Waiting In Vain”, “Three Little Birds” and “Turn Your Lights Down Low”, the latter inspired by his new girlfriend, Cindy Breakspeare, who had become Miss World in November 1976. He also wrote a sketch of “Ambush In The Night”, which directly recounted the events of the shooting and eventually appeared on his 1979 album *Survival*.

Subjected to constant low-level harassment by the Bahaman authorities, Marley’s entourage left Nassau early in January. Rita and the children returned to Jamaica, while Bob and his crew left together for London. He knew the city well. He had first visited in 1971, while working with Johnny Nash. In London, he and The Wailers recorded the bulk of their first two classic albums for Island – *Catch A Fire* and *Burnin’*, in 1973 – and it was where they taped the masterful *Live!* at the Lyceum in July 1975. He and The Wailers had visited most recently while touring *Rastaman Vibration*, selling out five dates at Hammersmith Odeon in June 1976.

Professionally, the city had been good to him. Personally, he and The Wailers felt safe and at home there – particularly in the area around Island’s Basing Street studio in Notting Hill, close to the nexus of West Indian restaurants, nightclubs and bars on Portobello Road, Westbourne Grove and Latimer Road. They frequently ate at the nearby Mangrove Café. At other times, members of

JOHNNY ARMSTEAD/ALAMY LIVENEWS

The blue plaque at 42 Oakley Street, Chelsea, where Marley and The Wailers lived in 1977





Marley - flanked by a security officer - outside the X-Ray department of Kingston's University Hospital after being shot by a gunman who invaded his Hope Road home, December 1976



MARLEY GUNNED DOWN

BOB MARLEY was shot and wounded when gunmen attacked his home in Kingston, Jamaica last Friday. Five men, armed apparently with automatic weapons, sprayed Marley's Hope Road home with bullets, wounding him in the chest and arm.

Marley's wife Rita was also wounded, and his manager, Don Taylor, received five bullets and was later placed on the critical list.

Fears that the concert would have to be scrapped after the shooting were nulled when it went ahead at the Caymanas Racecourse where an enthusiastic crowd of 80,000 attended. The Third World group played for an hour prior to the arrival of the

Wailers, who were accompanied by a police escort. The Wailers took the stage without bass player Aston "Family Man" Barrett, who, according to an Island Records spokesman, "could not be found." Ex-Wailers Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston were also not present.

Marley himself took the stage, intending to play only one number, and stayed for an hour and a half, later exhibiting his wounds to the audience. Rita was also present. Prime Minister Michael Manley watched the entire concert "in plain view", standing on top of a Volkswagen microbus.

Later, Marley's manager Don Taylor was taken off from the critical list.

Marley has pledged all profits from his latest single, "Smile Jamaica," to the poor of Trenchtown, Kingston's most poverty stricken ghetto. The single, already released once in Jamaica, was recalled while it was remixed. No release date has been set for Great Britain.



Rita Marley, who made a full recovery from a shot to the head

out-reasoning, out-talking and out-smoking all the Rastas. Those walls didn't stay white for long; they ended up a kind of an off-white colour!"

Life at Oakley Street quickly settled into a routine, centred on food, exercise, music and debate. Garrick was the crew's designated driver. He and The Wailers' late drummer Carlton Barrett visited Shepherd's Bush to buy fish and vegetables, and the band went shopping for records and clothes. Marley relaxed by watching TV, but mostly he liked to stay active.

"Bob had a personal trainer, Jamaica's best soccer player, Allan 'Skill' Cole," recalls Marvin. "Bob's girlfriend at the time, Cindy Breakspeare, worked at a gym, and she would make sure he came and worked out when there was no-one around. He did daily meditation; he had the awareness to take care of himself. People would say in the press: 'Bob Marley smokes 100 tons of weed a day!' We'd laugh about it. The main thing was having a balance."

"They were either recording, on tour, or playing football," says Island's house photographer Adrian Boot, who worked closely with Marley in the '70s. Oakley Street was only a couple of hundred yards over Albert Bridge from Battersea Park. "They played there with the Island All Stars team," Boot continues. "Nobody watched, nobody had a clue what was going on. He was a star, but not a megastar. They would have breakfast, play football, have lunch, and then go into the studio."

"Was nice time in London," recalls Family Man. "We rehearsed, meditated, prepared ourselves every day to record, making sure we never missed a beat. All of us there in the band was just living the life and doing music as we always did."

"It was great musically," says Garrick. "Bob

the local Afro-Caribbean community brought pots of fish curry and rice and peas to the studio.

"He was very comfortable in London," says the British guitarist Julian 'Junior' Marvin, who joined The Wailers in London in 1977. "A lot of people he grew up with were there. There was a great Jamaican and Afro-Caribbean community, and people from Ethiopia, Africa."

His new home base was 42 Oakley Street in Chelsea - a four-storey, eight-bedroom Georgian townhouse close to the Thames. His band and entourage settled there. Marley's bedroom was at the very top of the building, accessible only by a wrought-iron spiral staircase.

At first, "we were underground," says Garrick. "Nobody knew we were around." As word spread, however, Oakley Street became a communal hub, bristling with activity at all hours. Marley hosted rising reggae bands such as Sons Of Jah, the British Rasta organisation 12 Tribes Of Israel, and a

"BOB DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE SHOOTING MUCH"

CHRIS BLACKWELL

revolving guest list of journalists, dealers, chancers, managers, musicians, even exiled members from the Ethiopian royal family. "He had his own cook, Gilly, who would prepare Ital food for him," says Don Letts. "There were various women around grooming his locks. He would hold court,

always said he loved being on tour because we were always together – when he got an idea for a song, he wanted to work on it immediately. At home everyone had an individual agenda, but now we were all living in the same house. That’s why we recorded 20 songs at Island studios, because we had that time. They had a rehearsal room as well as a studio there, so we would rehearse the songs a lot.”

From February through to the end of April, Marley and The Wailers rehearsed and recorded constantly at Island’s second studio, the Fallout, situated below the label’s offices at St Peter’s Square in Hammersmith. Much of the overdubbing and mixing was later done at Basing Street. The heart of the band remained the Barretts, The Wailers’ long-standing sibling rhythm section. Tyrone Downie played keyboards, while Junior Marvin took over from Donald Kinsey on lead guitar. Rated by Blackwell as “the strongest guitarist who played with Bob”, he first met Marley at Island on Valentine’s Day, 1977.

“It was a very electric experience,” he says. “Chris Blackwell took me to Bob. His back was turned to me, and I saw this aura around him. He was so happy to be alive after the shooting in Jamaica. He was smiling and having a good time. He couldn’t believe he was still alive, getting protection from the spiritual vibration. We started rehearsing right after that. He was there with Tyrone, who at the time was filling in on bass. My first jam with Bob that day was ‘Exodus’, ‘Waiting In Vain’ and ‘Jamming’. We played each song for about 45 minutes. He was still putting final touches to the lyrics and the music.”

The studio sessions started late in the afternoon and continued into the small hours. Marley liked to feed off the energy of a crowd while recording. The studio was typically rammed, often with young British musicians and fellow Rastas, among them members of Aswad, Steel Pulse and Misty In Roots. Marley took a keen, almost paternal interest in the children of Jamaican immigrants spreading their wings. For David Hinds, the singer in Steel Pulse, the Birmingham-based reggae band, encountering Marley at Island “was as if Jesus came through the door. That’s how we felt. We were speechless. Though when he heard we were called Steel Pulse his face screwed up!”

“Back then, black British youth, we were like a lost tribe, man,” says Don Letts. “We were children of Windrush, looking for clues as to where we fitted in. The American thing, the Black Panthers, didn’t really apply to us. We were obviously looking to Jamaica, because we were of Jamaica, but we were something else. Bob seemed to come at a time that

performs live on stage in June 1977 at the Hammersmith Odeon, London, England.



“THEY GROOVED TOGETHER SO WELL, IT WAS MAGICAL”

ZIGGY MARLEY

suggested that there was a way forward where you could be a mixture of different things and still hold your own. Bob had a white father but he did things on his terms, on his own cultural values. There was no concession to Eurocentric ideas. That was really empowering.”

Between takes the musicians took breaks to talk, eat and play competitive matches of football. “There was no rush in the studio, nobody watching the clock,” says Marvin. “We had it booked 24 hours a day – for him that was like a dream come true. We had a good time recording live, the organic way. It would be drums, bass, piano, acoustic guitar, lead guitar and rough vocals. All separated. Bob could redo his rhythm guitar, and he would redo a lot of the vocals.”

“When I was remastering *Exodus* I was listening from the perspective of a musician,” says Ziggy Marley. “The musicianship, man, is so great on those tapes. I’m still in awe of that group of musicians and my father. They

grooved together so well, it was really magical.”

Two members of the I-Threes – Marley’s wife Rita and Marcia Griffiths – were flown over from Jamaica to add their background vocals; Griffiths recalls that the group’s third member, Judy Mowatt, initially couldn’t come. “The vibe was so nice,” she says. “The first night in the studio we did three tracks, recording live. The first one I did was ‘Waiting In Vain’. Rita and I would sing together, then go back and do two more voices, a different set of harmonies. Bob loved high harmonies. If all three of us were singing, he wanted an additional note that was higher than the norm. What he was hearing in his head was so unique. We continued to go into the studio every night, and even as I was singing I was thinking, ‘This man is amazing!’ I was knocked out, song after song after song. They all had different messages and they were all so powerful.”

The songs were of mixed provenance. Many had been written recently, several were a little older, and a handful had been recorded many years previously by The Wailers. “Some of the redos, like ‘Satisfy My Soul’, he felt that they didn’t get their true justice,” says Neville Garrick. “That’s why he did them over.”

Marley often viewed his songs as prophecies. Parts of his previous album, *Rastaman Vibration*, certainly suggested that he possessed the power of premonition. “Who The Cap Fit” was a song about broken trust and betrayal by backstabbers, false friends and pretenders. “*Some will hate you, pretend they love you now/Then behind they try to eliminate you.*” Given what had happened at Hope Road eight months after its release, it now sounded



“Rise up fallen fighters/Rise and take your stance again/It’s he who fight and run away/Live to fight another day.”

The title track was inspired by the Biblical book of Exodus, and its apposite quote by Moses: *“I have become a stranger in a strange land.”* Though the song spoke of the wider journey of the African diaspora back to its spiritual homeland, as well as exhorting every individual to mobilise towards their given destination, it also possessed a more obvious personal resonance. Marley recognised that the period he was spending in his own personal wilderness was also a journey towards greater self-knowledge.

“These songs were not so much a reaction to the physical political situation, but to his spiritual situation,” says Ziggy Marley. “There is a sense of his spiritual strength. Later, he did songs like ‘Ambush In The Night’, which was written in relation to the incident itself, but immediately after the shooting it was a spiritual reflection. He felt the power of God, in terms of: they tried to kill me, and God saved me.”

Coming so soon after the shooting, *Exodus* cemented the image of Marley as a quasi-messianic figure, a prophet who had been struck down, only to rise again with forgiveness in his heart. On “So Much Things To Say” he places himself in a lineage that includes Jesus Christ, Marcus Garvey and the hanged 19th-century Jamaican activist Paul Bogle.

In private, the attempt on his life was rarely mentioned, but those close to him felt it had left a wound deeper than any bullet could inflict. “He was there for his people, wholeheartedly, and those people are the same ones who tried to take his life – to crucify him,” says Marcia Griffiths. “This knock him head hard. I don’t think he ever got over that moment.”

“Sometimes you don’t talk a lot about what you’re going through emotionally,” says Marley’s eldest daughter, Cedella. “You’re still processing. I think that’s what he was doing with *Exodus* and *Kaya*. Now, when I listen, I get a deeper understanding. Love and loneliness, it’s a double edge. Daddy was very hurt by it all. He never thought that these people would shoot him. He was hurt because he really believed he was close with everyone. You hear that in *Exodus*. It’s hurt, it’s passion, it’s almost like you feel abandoned and you have more questions than answers.”

WITH A EUROPEAN tour scheduled for early May, Chris Blackwell came in to mix the new recordings. He was responsible for the extraordinary opening moments of *Exodus*, when the unhurried rhythm and hypnotic minor chords announcing “Natural Mystic” fade ominously into earshot, like an avenging army ascending through the mist. “I loved the rhythmic feel, and so I had the idea that it would be great to start it very quiet and then have it build up,” he says. “It’s one of my favourites.”

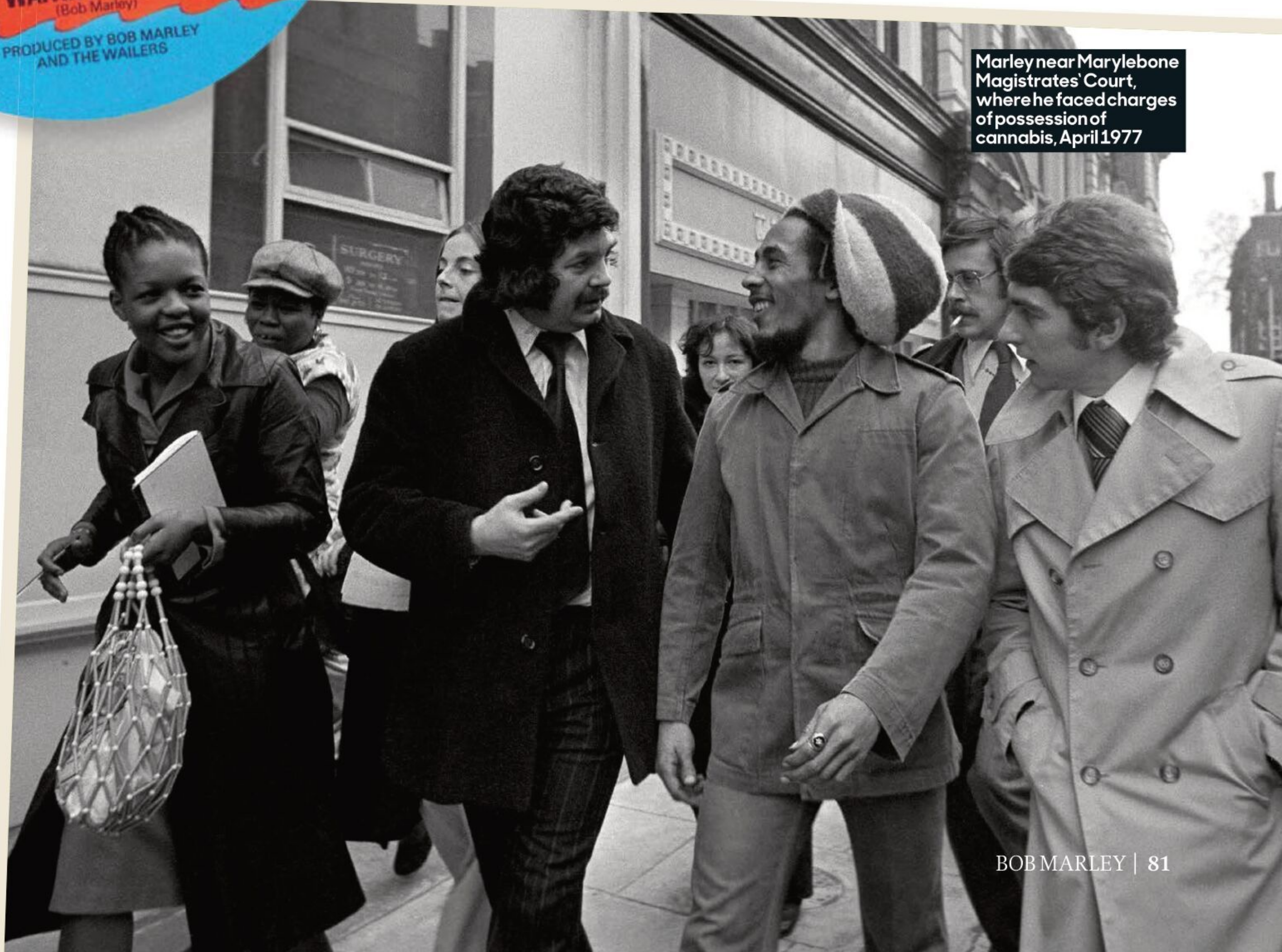
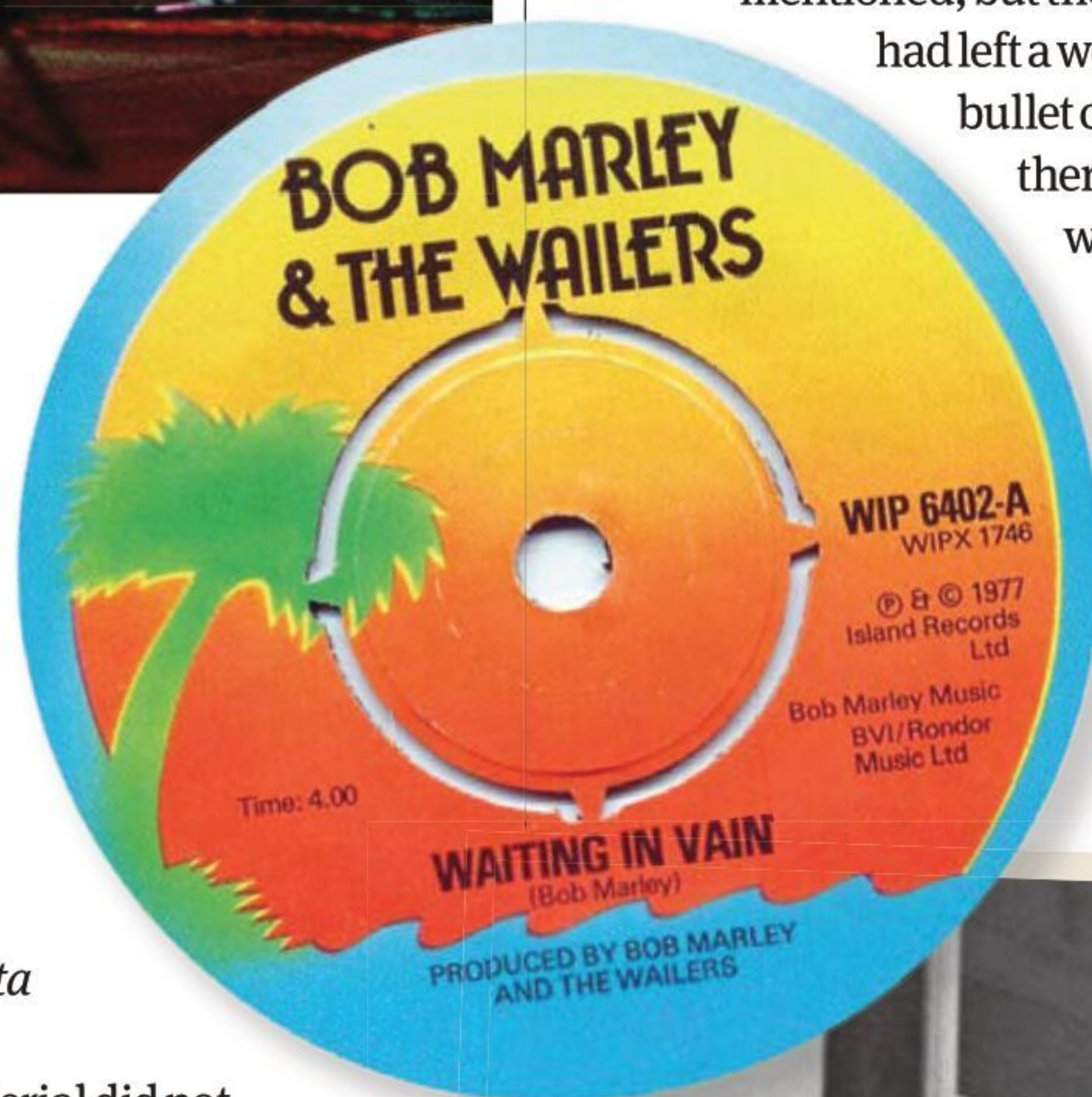
More than 40 years later, it remains a spine-tingling introduction. “I have never heard any album start like that in the history of music,” says David Hinds. “Powerful? We need a better word than that! I got the album, put it on my turntable, and I hear this track creeping up. It seemed to take an age before the drum roll kicks in. I couldn’t believe it. Bob was always setting a precedent, in terms of ideas and innovation. He set the tone and imagery for what reggae should be about, as far as growing intellectually and the vibe. It wasn’t just the lyrical content, or the vocals – it was about the way the music was being presented.”

Marley and Blackwell selected for *Exodus* the 10 tracks that fused most cohesively, setting the rest aside for the next record. “I can’t remember the decision, but we picked the ones we felt would work for *Exodus*,” says Blackwell, who was also key in determining the running order. The first side is front-loaded with the more serious, spiritually reflective material. The second side, in contrast, ➤

spookily prescient. “Rat Race”, meanwhile, had been his most unambiguous denouncement of escalating tensions between the People’s National Party and Jamaican Labour Party: *“Political violence fill ya city, yeah!/Don’t involve Rasta in your say-say/Rasta don’t work for no CIA.”*

In contrast, the new material did not comment explicitly on what Marley had recently endured. The closest he came to a direct reference was a line in “Jamming”: *“No bullet can stop us now, we neither beg nor we won’t bow.”* Instead, he infused the songs with something more powerful, a mixture of raw confusion, spiritual and romantic affirmation, and a promise to his enemies of a mighty reckoning to come.

The album’s opener, “Natural Mystic”, may have been a couple of years old, but it chimed strongly with his present circumstances. *“Things are not the way they used to be,”* sings Marley, adding, *“Many more will have to suffer, many more will have to die – don’t ask me why.”* The message of “Guiltiness”, a thick, heavy groove, is simple and self-explanatory: *“Guiltiness rest on their conscience.”* “The Heathen” was a rallying cry to his allies who had remained in Jamaica while he gathered his energies.



Marley near Marylebone Magistrates’ Court, where he faced charges of possession of cannabis, April 1977

PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

is as light, accessible and universal as anything Marley had ever written, and includes “Jamming”, “Waiting In Vain”, “One Love” and “Three Little Birds”.

“My father is known for the social stuff, but he was also really into love songs,” says Ziggy Marley. “He had a good balance between the revolutionary state of mind and the human state of mind, where he could still express his feelings about the women in his life, whether it was my mother, or Cindy Breakspeare, or whoever.”

In London, with both his wife and girlfriend in situ, Marley gamely juggled his romantic responsibilities. Rita and Marcia Griffiths were installed in an apartment at 1 Harrington Gardens in South Kensington, less than a mile from Oakley Street. Marley visited regularly for dinner, and his wife often came to Chelsea, scything through the crowd of hangers-on. “Sister Rita was always the mother hen when it comes to seeing that everything is going good, getting people out of his room, overseeing everything,” says Griffiths. “She had the power to get people away from him.”

As the current Miss World, Breakspeare had access to a flat in London, where she and Marley repaired for greater privacy. On occasion they spent the night together at Claridge’s. Their son, Damian, was conceived during Marley’s year in London.

Although Garrick recalls that Marley’s life mostly revolved around the house, the studio and the football pitch, he occasionally frequented some of the capital’s more high-end night spots. “He was a bit of a party animal, really!” says Don Letts. “He was quite fond of places like Tramp’s and Monkberry’s – that wasn’t my crowd. Then again, he could go and get rootsy at the same time.” The Wailers visited the cafés and drinking dens of west London, as well as nightclubs such as the Four Aces in Dalston and the Q Club in Paddington. Sometimes, though not often, Marley joined them. In her excellent book *The Book Of Exodus*, the writer Vivien Goldman recalls him lurking in the shadows of the Metro Youth Club in Westbourne Park while Dennis

Bovell played a hot-off-the-press mix of “Exodus”.

“I remember going down to the Carnival with him,” says Letts. “I was with my then girlfriend. He sent me off to get some weed for him, and when I got back he’s chatting up my fucking girlfriend. He was a real geezer, he had this cheeky side to him. A lot of charm and obvious charisma. He moved between the two strata of society very easily.”

THE EUROPEAN TOUR began in Paris on May 10. On June 1, Marley and The Wailers arrived in north London for the first of six scheduled dates at the Rainbow, his first public performance in the UK since the shooting. “I’ll never forget the Rainbow,” says Marcia Griffiths. “After the whole thing in Jamaica, everyone was very curious. They had heard everything that happened and they wanted to see this man. There was such tension; I could feel it in the audience. When Bob hit that stage, it was like good triumphing over evil. We were all fearless, because he was a man with no doubts or negative thoughts. He’d gone to another level, a higher high. He was just locked in the music.”

“I saw him perform at the Rainbow,” says the dub-poet Linton Kwesi Johnson. “He came alive on stage. It was almost as if he were in a trance. He was transported into a different kind of world. They were mixed audiences. There was huge black community support, but the majority would have been British pop fans.”

Marley was hitting a peak, but there was a shadow over it all. The Rainbow run ended



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prematurely on June 4, with the final two concerts cancelled. Griffiths recalls that during the shows, Blackwell “was side stage, watching Bob so closely, and you could see he had this worried look on his face. He thought he might fall.”

The problem was a toe injury Marley had sustained while playing football in Battersea Park. He appeared at sessions and in interviews with his foot heavily bandaged, although at first few people were aware of the seriousness of the

affliction. “Bob loved football as much as he loved music, and when he was taken to a Harley Street doctor they said we should really amputate the toe,” says Blackwell. “Bob was not interested in that at all, because he loved soccer.”

While visiting America that summer, preparing for the US leg of the tour, “Bob went to another doctor in Florida, and the doctor there also said he should amputate his toe,” continues Blackwell. “He didn’t accept that, so he sent for a Rastafari doctor from Jamaica. The Rastafari don’t believe in cutting, so he got exactly [the diagnosis] he wanted from him! The thing I’m ashamed about, and I think everyone around him at that time should be, is that we didn’t keep on top of him to have it checked out every couple of months. We just forgot about it. If we had done that, he might still be alive today. I feel very guilty about that. He was pretty



Bob with the I-Threes (Judy Mowatt, Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths) at the Rainbow, June 3, 1977



Live at the Rainbow Theatre, London, June 1977

adamant that he didn't want to lose his toe, but we should have forced him."

In the long term, the injury contributed to the cancer that ended Marley's life prematurely in May 1981. In the short term, it forced the cancellation of the entire American tour for *Exodus*, just when he was on the cusp of breaking through in the States. *Rastaman Vibration* had given him his first Top 10 album the previous year, and "Roots, Rock, Reggae" had broken into the *Billboard* 100. When the *Exodus* dates were pulled, the momentum stalled. The album peaked at No 20 in America, and there were no further hit singles. "*Exodus* was about to explode worldwide," says Garrick, "but him never get to America with that album."

It was a different story in Britain. *Exodus* was released in the first week of June and quickly reached No 8. It stayed on the charts for the best part of a year, by which time Marley's next album, *Kaya*, had already hit the Top 5. Yet the album's significance can't simply be measured in numbers. With its rich blend of reggae, soul, pop, gospel and R&B, Marley intended *Exodus* to be a powerful contemporary musical statement that travelled further than any of his previous records.

"We spent a lot of time mixing, trying to perfect everything," says Junior Marvin. "We'd compare our albums with the top albums of the time and see how ours compared sonically. We were out to match everybody. It really revolutionised the sound of reggae. It wasn't just great songs, it was musically almost perfect."

"He had his following, but he hadn't had that

"BOB CAME ALIVE ON STAGE - AS IF HE WERE IN A TRANCE"

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

wide reach until the wider impact of *Exodus*," says Linton Kwesi Johnson. "In the UK, you had two main streams, divided between soul and reggae. For the soul boys, African-American soul music seemed more sophisticated and modern than reggae. Bob won a lot of those people over."

Exodus made explicit the essential polarity of Marley's nature, the roots rebel vying with the mellow unifier. "He was very much a double-edged sword, and *Exodus* reflects that," says Letts. "His music has that weird duality that Jamaica has." Marley was well aware of the dichotomy. In concert, he performed the softer pop songs from the album only very rarely, while the commercial potential of "One Love" and "Three Little Birds" was overlooked at the time; they were released as singles only posthumously. Instead, the first 45 taken from the album was the more strident title track. In July, Marley and The Wailers appeared on *Top Of The Pops*, introduced by Tony Blackburn, to

perform a truncated version of "Exodus", which gave him his second Top 20 single.

SOMETHING ELSE, OF course, was happening in London in 1977. Living in Chelsea, Marley had a ringside seat at the epicentre of punk. Oakley Street was just off the Kings Road, literally around the corner from the shop Letts was managing at the time, Acme Attractions, as well as Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's SEX boutique, recently rebranded Seditionaries. His attitude to punk changed during his stay. Lee Perry was also in town, staying in the flat above Basing Street, and initially the pair mocked this new movement, dismissing it as the worthless ravings of a bunch of crazy baldheads. Letts was DJing at the Roxy, mixing reggae and dub with punk and soul cuts. He recalls one particularly memorable confrontation on the issue.

"I went round once to Oakley Street, wearing my bondage trousers, and Bob looks at me and says, 'Don Letts, you look like a bloodclaat mountaineer! You look like one of them nasty punk rockas!' He went off on one. He had obviously been reading the tabloid press, and as far as they were concerned punk was nihilistic and negative and all that shit. I thought it was about empowerment and freedom and individuality, which had a lot in common with reggae and Rasta. I told Bob, 'Look, you've got it wrong. These are my friends. There's something going on here, we're like-minded rebels.' To which he basically said, 'Yeah, get the fuck outta here!', albeit with a smile on his face." ➤



The Wailers with the I-Threes circa 1978

Slowly, Marley started to come around. On their debut album, released in April 1977, The Clash covered Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves", which Murvin had originally recorded with Perry. By September, Perry was producing the band's new single, "Complete Control", while many emerging reggae groups were supporting punk acts. The same month, *Sounds* published a cover story, written by Vivien Goldman, which proclaimed 'Jah Punk: The Black New Wave'. "The punks are the outcasts from society," Marley told Goldman. "So are the Rastas."

"The punk interest was genuine," says David Hinds of Steel Pulse. "I lived it, I saw it. At first we thought, 'What the fuck?' But then we saw it was sincere, and we were part of it. It was a crossover; the racial divide was being eroded because of that. It was the time of the 'sus' laws, the dawn of Thatcher, high unemployment, unlawful imprisonment. We tried to express that in our music. Perhaps the punk thing came through on a more superficial level – they were a different race – but when someone agrees that this ain't right, you feel a camaraderie."

Marley's "Punky Reggae Party" crudely articulated the affiliation between the two camps. Co-written with Perry, the lyrics are closer in spirit to the Upsetter's maverick style than Marley's more considered approach. "New wave, new rave... Wailers be there/The Damned, The Jam, The Clash/Maytals will be there/Doctor Feelgood, too/No boring old farts..." Says Don Letts: "Three months after our argument, a somewhat better informed Bob Marley – and people like Vivien Goldman had a lot to do with that – was moved to write 'Punky Reggae Party'. That has always brought a smile to my face. He realised there was

something there that he could relate to. It was an act of recognition."

Recorded in a chaotic session at Fallout in late summer and released in December as the B-side of "Jamming", "Punky Reggae Party" was a somewhat self-conscious attempt to tap into that

spirit of '77. For once, Marley was following rather than leading. "I never liked that track," says Chris Blackwell. "It didn't feel right to me. I never felt it was his kind of thing. It was just something that happened because that was what was happening in London at that time. A lot of people love it, but not me."

Around the time Marley was recording "Punky Reggae Party", "Waiting In Vain" was released as the second single from *Exodus*. One of his most beguiling love songs, it barely scraped into the Top 40. Blackwell blames an unsatisfactory mix for its underperformance. "I particularly remember working on [that] one song for days and days, because I felt it was a real hit song, but I never felt I got it right, unfortunately," he says. "I love that song, but I feel that it could have been better. I let down the side a bit by not getting it as it should be."

As the English winter began to bite, with one album out, another in the can and all his live shows cancelled, Marley began spending more time in Miami, where he had recently bought a house for his mother. As well as taking further medical advice regarding his toe, he spent time with his visiting children, who'd had very little contact with their father since he had left Jamaica in January. "We had phone calls here and there," says Cedella, who was 10 at the time. "He would check in to see how we were doing. 'How is school? What are your grades? Anybody trouble you?' The normal parent questions! He never mentioned when he was coming home, so we never asked. After we got back together in Miami, he just wanted us to have fun and be happy. He had a house there for his mother. It was like a refuge. He would play ball, smoke herb and make music."

"I spent the next five or six months with him in

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS



IS THIS LOVE

**"THE UNIVERSE
WAS BOB'S
HOME, NOT
JUST JAMAICA"**
NEVILLE GARRICK

Miami, where he wrote a lot of other songs,” says Garrick, “He would go back and forth to England.” During return trips to London, Marley put the final touches to *Kaya* and filmed the video for the album’s lead single, “Is This Love?”, at the Keskidee Centre, one of the first homes for black theatre in the UK, located in Gifford Street in north London.

While there he met Linton Kwesi Johnson, who was working at Keskidee as an education resources officer. “He had heard of me, though [Johnson’s debut album] *Dread, Beat An’ Blood* wasn’t out yet,” he says. “He wanted to know why I wasn’t saying Rastafari, and why I was so militant. I more or less said I wasn’t a very religious person, and that I’d been involved in activism since I was a schoolboy. He was very charming and charismatic. Not in your face. A lot of Jamaican artists are like, ‘I am the don!’ He was more humble and unassuming.”

The video for “Is This Love?” may have portrayed Marley as a U-rated pied piper at a children’s party, but behind the scenes more serious business was taking place. “That day, he met up with some of the two leading factions of the political gangs from Jamaica,” says Johnson. “Claude Massop was there, he was the top don for the Jamaican Labour Party, representing Tivoli Gardens; and Bucky Marshall was there, representing the People’s National Party. They came there to persuade him to return to Jamaica to do the One Love peace concert.”

“The Centre had a ‘backstage’ area,” says Adrian Boot, who shot the session for Island; his portrait of Marley from that day was later used as the cover of the Legend comp. “There were all sorts of people there, people that I didn’t normally see on the London scene. They had obviously come over from Jamaica.”

“They had declared this peace treaty in Jamaica,” says Garrick. “Claude and Bucky came to London to talk to Bob about coming back and being a part of it.” Marley also met Jamaican president Michael Manley while in London. The aim was to secure his safe passage home with suitable fanfare.

He finally returned on February 26, 1978, the day after the release of “Is This Love?”, some 14 months after his hurried dawn departure. He came back to prepare for his headlining performance at the One Love concert, held on April 22, 1978 at Kingston National Stadium. During his set, Marley brought Manley and his political rival Edward Seaga up on stage, persuading them to join hands in reconciliation. “It felt good to be back,” says Family Man. “Security was high but it was a great feeling. Everyone was secure.”

Kaya was released in March, in the lead-up to the concert. Far from bristling with militant urgency, it was an altogether more quietly defiant statement. Though tinged with the ache of a man who had clearly missed his home, it is Marley’s mellowest, most laid-back and unashamedly love-struck record. “*Kaya* is named after the sweetest herb,” says Cedella Marley. “The artwork is just a big-assed spliff in your face! It was like: ‘This is who I am, take it or leave it.’ It’s about enjoying your herb and being in love.” Occasionally, more intense personal reflections spilled over. “I love ‘Running Away’, which ended up on *Kaya*,” says Blackwell. “I think it was Bob talking about what he had done leaving Jamaica, in a way.”

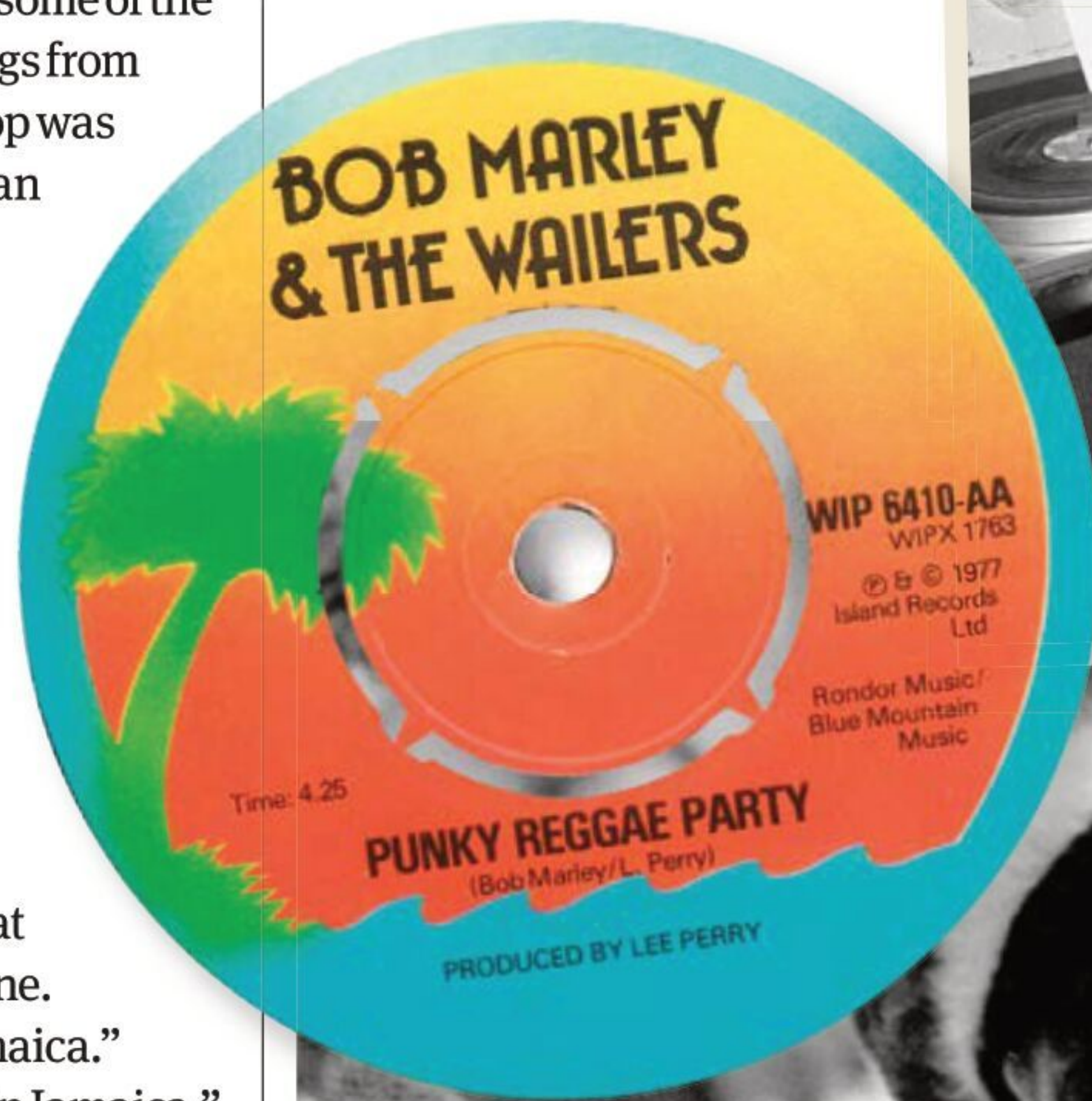
The final fruits of Marley’s extraordinary year in exile, *Kaya* was the work of a man greatly changed by the period he had spent away. The pay-off from his time in London was vast and complicated. During it, his reach expanded greatly, a legacy that doesn’t always sit comfortably with all his fans.

“In the 21st century, the rebellious warrior that spoke to me has been de-clawed and de-fanged a bit,” says Don Letts. “It’s the ‘One Love’ Bob that gets pushed to the foreground. That’s an intrinsic part of who he is, but for a lot of people, for whom things are still shit, the Bob they identify with is the [militant] Bob.”

Yet the powerful duality of the messages that emerged during his exile played a huge part in Marley’s enduring relevance as an artist. “He was a genius, in so far that out of the particular he was

able to arrive at the universal,” says Linton Kwesi Johnson. “Accessibility was one of his great strengths.”

Already aware that his time was increasingly short, he was now writing not just for those in the ghetto who needed immediate uplift, but for those in the penthouse who required their wider consciousness upgraded. “He found out during that time that the universe was his home, not just Jamaica,” says Neville Garrick. “That’s why the songwriting had a more universal appeal. It’s when Bob realised he could speak for the world.”



Marley at Marylebone Magistrates' Court, London, where he was fined for possession of cannabis, April 6, 1977



"I am not a leader. Messenger."

Spring 1977. Fame and politics are making Bob Marley's life more charged than ever, five months after he was shot by gunmen in his own house. Now, he is making clear that the message is more important than the man. "The words of the songs, not the person, is what attracts people," he tells **RAY COLEMAN**, as The Wailers play their first show in Paris, and their protective manager is wary of even the most transported stage invader...





MELODY MAKER
21/05/1977

BOB MARLEY says his most crucial song is “Get Up, Stand Up” – this is his clarion call to people to stand up for their rights, live and not mentally die, think positively. If one song has to represent him, says Marley, this is it, because it’s a force for good influence. Nothing to do with aggression,

he says – just strength of determination.

Curiously, it was during this very song’s performance by Marley and the Wailers in Paris last week that something strange, and unscheduled, happened which vindicated his belief in the power of his favourite song. During a prolonged version, an athletic guy who looked like an extra from *Roots* broke through the very thin security barrier, ran up to Marley on the giant stage and joined in Bob’s dance.

It was an electric moment – and after a few minutes with eyes closed as he danced to his vocals, Marley embraced the interloper. For a minute, Bob was in danger of being visually outshone by some extremely lithe dancing around the microphone. Just then, Marley’s bemused manager, a muscular American

named Don Taylor, having waited his moment, ran across, forcefully grabbed the man and marched him offstage in an astonishingly well-timed piece of manipulation.

The crowd booed Taylor the baddie, who appeared to them to be spoiling the fun. But it was clear to Taylor that Marley had had enough of the intrusion, having cast the man aside. Disregarding the amazing fact that the security was lax enough to allow a fan through the net, Marley’s manager was right to oust him.



Five months ago, Don Taylor risked his own life in order to save Marley’s, when gunmen burst into Bob’s home in Kingston, Jamaica, in a political shooting which is believed to have resulted from The Wailers’ tacit support of Michael Manley in the country’s election. Taylor was shot in the leg and badly injured – having leaped across to protect Marley as bullets rained. Marley escaped with an injured arm.

This night in Paris, Taylor feared another “nut” getting too close to his man. Yet Marley said later he was pleased the dancer had felt moved to get up on stage and show his jubilation at this particular song. If people felt a quality in its message, he was doing his job.

Marley now feels more evangelical than ever about reggae and its positive healing powers, especially when linked to his all-absorbing belief in Rastafarianism. He needed to have no qualms about reaching out and touching the Parisians. Ten thousand of them, about half black, packed into an atrocious venue in the form of a converted abattoir – and they demonstrated what British reggae fans have so far failed to prove, that this should be fundamentally a peaceful music. There was no aggravation, no crime, simply vociferous enthusiasm for a star whose momentum seems



True feeling:
Marley live,
circa '77

unstoppable as he continues to build fine albums one on top of another, and whose stagecraft is utterly captivating.

Sure, there is a touch of carnival about the way Marley and the Wailers are projected: the barker who comes out before the concert working up the fans with: “Rastafari! Rastafari!” And Marley knows how to preserve his mystique by saying nothing, letting the songs speak for themselves. But this remains contemporary music’s most relentlessly moving show. It restores chills to the spine. It’s a blood-tingling matter of absolute communication on a street level by a musician who is absolutely in touch with his audience.

Paris was the first call on Marley’s European tour, which reaches London’s Rainbow on June 1. The sound was occasionally rough, cues were missed, but with Marley and the Wailers it hardly matters. Their strength lies not in refined textures but in pure gut feeling. This time round, Marley has added a lead guitarist, Julian “Junior” Marvin, playing marvellously melancholy, bluesy solos on “No Woman, No Cry,” and generally strengthening the sound. Marley says he’s added Marvin so that he can be freer to move around the stage as a singer. Nowhere was this more in evidence than during his exotic, dervish-like dances on “Lively Up Yourself”.

We know Marley to be an athlete – a strong footballer, he gets up at home in Jamaica every day at 5am to go running – but his energy and surprisingly inventive dancing here was a joyful sight, perfectly in the mood of the song. Arms and dreadlocks flailing, he was a magical picture.

For the most part, Marley gave Paris a Greatest Hits set. This was correct for his first visit to the city; the people wanted to see him perform, rather than deliver unfamiliar material. So the old favourites rolled out: “Too Many Rivers To Cross”, “Concrete Jungle”, “I Shot The Sheriff”, “Burnin’ And Lootin’”, “Bellyfull”, “War” and encores with “Get Up, Stand Up” and “Exodus”, the title track from the new album.

The latter is an incredibly powerful live song. It’s strong enough on the record, but live, with the I Threes looking and sounding immaculate and Marley and the band linking up for chanting vocals, it’s one of those insistent songs that burns deep into the mind, and which you take away from the theatre to remember the next day.

LIKE most of the new record, it’s a spiritual song, and I asked Marley if the mood of the LP was dictated by the shooting incident at his house or by his ongoing commitment to religion (he told me, incidentally, that he prays regularly). No, he said, Rastafari was interlinked with his religious convictions and the theme of the album meant he was no more interested now than ever before. But he did feel he was a kind of messenger who had been given some mission to tell others that belief in Jah worked for him and could work for anyone who approached it openly.

But, asked this cynic, didn’t thousands of his fans go to his performances just to see a cult hero and get off a compulsive beat, interpreting such songs as “War” and “Get Up, Stand Up” as aggressive incitements to...

“I am not a leader,” Marley said.

At this point, it should be explained that to talk to

“I DON’T WANT TO BE A LEADER, BUT A CHEERLEADER”

BOB MARLEY

Bob Marley is not an operation to be tackled lightly. He’s deeply suspicious, has an accent that makes it difficult to comprehend exactly what he says, and is a canny deflector of head-on questions. He would undoubtedly make it hard for Robin Day.

If he’s not a leader, I said, how come tens of thousands of people hustled for tickets for his concerts, and hung on every word he said?

“People want to listen to a message, word from Jah. This could be passed through me or anybody,” he answered, “I am not a leader. Messenger. The words of the songs, not the person, is what attracts people.”

But the words of his songs were his own, and surely he acknowledged that this gave him real power... “Me represent music and Rastafari, not politics,” he said in another of those oblique replies.

Marley’s belief in the healing power of his music is no more exemplified than by his last single, “Smile Jamaica”. At a time when his country’s morale was very low, this song was a straight plea to everyone to be optimistic and cheerful; it was also this spirit which was taken as an approval of Michael Manley’s government during the run-up to the election and which presumably motivated the gunmen who charged into Marley’s house.

But Bob was adamant that the song had done good. “People have to smile through difficulty,” he said. Was he always going to use his music thus, to steer people’s thoughts? “I never wanted to be a leader, or in a powerful position, just want to make music the way I am able to,” he said.

Was he intending his music to make people happy, or think?

“To make people think happiness.”

Asked what he thought of the ban on reggae music by certain British concert halls, following last year’s allegations of hooliganism, Marley said he was not bothered. “Music will get through. The politicians (this seems to be his word for all people who hold authority) will not be able to stop the people listening.” He never felt bitter, that was not his nature. “If I get bitter, I do not benefit, but the politicians benefit because my music will suffer,” he said.

Poverty was his biggest concern on a world basis: “Every little bit of trouble in the world caused by poverty,” he continued. “That what causes trouble in Jamaica, and poverty caused by politicians. That what they have to solve first. My people have redemption now, and now we must stop poverty because it make people think bad and feel bad.”

What had he thought of London during his two months in Britain, making his new album? “We don’t really like a place, just live there and look at climate,” he said laughing. “England OK. America OK. Jamaica home! It takes a long time to get used to England.”

What was the message, then, from his new LP, *Exodus*? “The songs say that if everything is not wrong, everything is all right. Think right and you will be right. What is message? Be pure. Togetherness is better than fighting. God make man equal, and everything must start and end with this philosophy. That why politicians dangerous...”

Did he ever contemplate going into politics and using his power? “Nah, music stronger! I don’t want to be a leader, but a cheerleader.”

But for all his soul searching, with Marley it’s not a posture. Intuitively one knows that here’s a deeply sincere man using his role intelligently and with a purity of purpose. He repeatedly says he wants reggae to become more popular because he sees it as a good thing for his people. Love songs were included on his albums virtually as a means to an end, he conceded. Rastafarianism was his message, for life.

The stage show seems more mature, less of a carnival than the one we saw last year on a British concert tour. The music’s intact and perhaps that little bit tighter. Marley’s physically strong and one of popular music’s most riveting performers. The new songs are heavy. Bob Marley & The Wailers are on the way. Smile Britain. 🗣️

EXODUS

RELEASED 3 JUNE 1977

In London exile, a natural mystic crafts his magnum opus. Oppressors shall be vanquished, but can “One Love” triumph over all? BY DAVID CAVANAGH

IN November 2011 Bunny Wailer, the last surviving member of the original Wailers, uploaded a lengthy diatribe to the internet in which he claimed that Rita Marley, acting on the instructions of Chris Blackwell, had murdered her husband, Bob, in 1981. Miraculously staying out of Jamaica’s libel courts by the skin of his teeth, Bunny repeated the accusation in a similar rant two years later, and this time he named the murder weapon.

Bob Marley, he alleged in 2013, died “from Radio Active Ash [sic] given to him by Rita”, and “this drug was given to Rita by Llord [sic] Christopher Blackwell to commit murder”. Bunny had perhaps smoked a bit too much herb over the years, it was kindly suggested. But what was interesting was the next sentence in his statement: “This [was] in the facilitating environment of 1976-1980 when the CIA placed an unusually large station in Jamaica, destabilising the Government of Michael Manley and his supporters through the music that would have had The Wailers/Bob Marley as a target.” With that bit of context, Bunny’s outlandish declaration briefly emerged from the fug of the fantastical and momentarily intersected with the realm of the plausible. When the politics of 1970s Jamaica are discussed, Rasta mystics and Infowars truthseekers alike will always speculate about the role of the CIA.

In the first half of that decade, as Marley’s name spread abroad, the sight of him instilled a deep unease – even a loathing – in the Jamaican authorities. By 1976, however, that picture was changing. Attitudes towards reggae and Rastafari had softened, and Marley’s populist touch was so uncanny that it was felt he could bring his influence to bear on the 1976 Jamaican general election. Many expected him to lend his support, as he had in 1972, to prime minister Michael Manley’s social democratic People’s National Party (PNP). The Tuff Gong was known to keep a cool head when the stakes were rising, but this was a poker game being played at the very highest level. Manley, with his links to Cuba and the Soviets, was a source of growing concern to Washington. And an endorsement for the PNP from reggae’s biggest superstar might have profound implications for the Cold War.

Just as keen to win Marley’s support was the opposition leader, Edward Seaga, of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). Prior to his political rise, the Harvard-educated Seaga had been a musicologist and a record label owner, playing a part in the unfolding reggae story by releasing a series of bluebeat 45s, including some by the Wailers’ vocal mentor Joe Higgs. That all seemed a long time ago by 1976, and Seaga was now widely viewed as a hopelessly compromised American stooge. That he was the Ford administration’s preferred candidate was clear from ►

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS

EXODUS

THE SECOND HALF
OF *EXODUS* IS AS
DIFFERENT TO THE
FIRST AS A MANIC
EPISODE IS TO A
DEPRESSION



The I-Three at the London Rainbow, June 3, 1977, the week of *Exodus*'s release

the graffiti around Jamaica that spelt his name 'CIA-ga'.

The CIA, engaged in a covert action programme on the island – paramilitary, economic, propaganda-driven – made a point of monitoring the influence of reggae on the poor, the young and the disenfranchised. Philip Agee, a former CIA case officer and author of the book *Inside The Company: CIA Diary*, later attested that the agency distributed guns to the JLP's criminal enforcers in order to foment island-wide fear and unrest. Agee concluded: "The climate was created for an attempt on Bob Marley's life." On December 3, two days before Marley was scheduled to perform at a free concert, someone gave the order to silence reggae's loudest voice.

The "Smile Jamaica" concert, which took place at Kingston's National Heroes Park, had been organised by Michael Manley with the idealistic aim of defusing tension – until, that is, Marley and the Wailers agreed to top the bill, at which point the PNP brought the election forward and "Smile Jamaica" became a de facto support rally. Outfoxed in his efforts to stay neutral, Marley was dubious about playing the concert but refused to withdraw despite threats from local gang lords. A massive PR coup for Michael Manley was just 48 hours away. That's when six gunmen drove into the yard at Marley's Hope Road compound, shot Rita as she was leaving, and burst into the house to spray gunfire at Bob, his manager Don Taylor and a friend named Lewis Griffith. For the Marleys, the high drama of politically motivated assassination was reduced to the smallest of margins: an inch or two either way. Rita took a bullet to her scalp rather than her brain. The bullet that hit her husband grazed his chest, coming to a halt in his left forearm. Because it would have been too precarious to extract without damaging nerve tendons, it remained in his arm for the rest of his life.

Two nights later, with extraordinary courage, Marley took the stage at "Smile Jamaica" to perform a full set in front of an 80,000-strong audience. There were another 200 people on the stage itself, it was estimated, insulating Marley from further attacks. Asked why he hadn't cancelled, he famously replied: "The people who are trying to make this world worse aren't taking a day off. How can I?" The words could have been uttered by Martin Luther

King or Gandhi. The appearance of Marley at "Smile Jamaica" was to become a pillar of his legend, marking his transition into heroism even as he pulled up the sleeve of his denim shirt and brandished the stigmata of the gunshot wound. When people talk about his departure for England in early '77, they don't call it a relocation. They call it 'going into exile' – the language of emperors and kings.

Marley and his musicians had already begun work on their next album, *Exodus*, before they made their various ways from Kingston to London. According to Roger Steffens' and LeRoy Jodie Pierson's *Bob Marley & The Wailers: The Definitive Discography*, the basic tracks for two songs ("The Heathen" and "One Love/People Get

CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is a highly charged spiritual record by the reggae musician most capable of articulating the mood of his people. It was conceived by Marley shortly after his brush with disaster at the hands of gunmen and thus there's precious little joy about it." **RAY COLEMAN, MELODY MAKER, MAY 14, 1977**

"The first side is religious, political and deeply serious. The second side had been described to me as Marley's Nashville Skyline, which is about half right, since it doesn't represent a retreat/ departure so much as an adjustment of focus." **CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY, NME, MAY 28, 1977**

EXODUS IS A LANDMARK ALBUM IN POLITICAL REGGAE

Ready") had been cut during the *Rastaman Vibration* sessions in 1975. All the same, *Exodus* has the aura of a London '77 album, a two-sevens-clash album, an album rich in portents and symbolism. It seems significant that Marley sings the opening song, "Natural Mystic", unaccompanied by the I Three. Sometimes his messages require a communion; this one, with its gentle fade-in and solemn minor chords, calls for him to deliver it alone. "Things are not the way they used to be/I won't tell no lie/One and all have to face reality now." Bearing in mind the violent backstory, it's the most restrained of starts to any of the great Wailers albums.

But if the sinewy, clutter-free arrangement of "Natural Mystic" implies a sort of post-traumatic serenity, Marley's

lyrics, which allude to the sounding of the seven trumpets in the Book Of Revelation, serve notice that his shooting will be avenged in some future tallying of the literally and the spiritually dead. These are the end times: Marley is back astride his pale horse. He continues to warn of a reckoning of unimaginable proportions in "So Much Things To Say", placing himself squarely in his culture's history of martyrs – Jesus Christ, Marcus Garvey, Paul Bogle of the Morant Bay rebellion – who fought "spiritual wickedness in high and low places" and paid the ultimate price. "Guiltiness", a song that Vivien Goldman claims to have heard him sing at Hope Road in '76, may have predated the murder attempt by some months, but like "The Heathen", which follows it, its bitter condemnation of faceless oppressors can be interpreted easily enough as a response to those who wanted him dead. Indeed, if the allegorical narrative can be stretched one step further, the album's first side becomes a five-song conceptual sequence, a kind of reggae Pentateuch, relating with vivid biblical imagery the events of December 3 and their aftermath. Marley's physical form may have left Jamaica in the first-class cabin of an aeroplane – he'd earned the right to fly in comfort, after all – but his spiritual form is on a barefoot pilgrimage to Africa ("Exodus"), returning as part of a generation of sufferers promised a home in Ethiopia by the Emperor Haile Selassie. In just 20 minutes of real-time listening, Marley takes us from the last book of the Bible all the way back to the second, and then doubles back on himself to a night in December 1976 in a darkened, dramatic Kingston park, where "Jah come to break down 'pression, rule equality, wipe away transgression, set the captives free." The downpressors of the CIA were thwarted at any rate. Their man Seaga lost the election by a landslide, winning only 13 of the 60 seats.

The second half of *Exodus* is as different to the first as a manic episode is to a depression. Marley's close friends and associates recall the upsurge in his creativity and the proliferation of new songs that resulted. In an unprecedented burst of activity at Island Studios, he and the Wailers managed to record not one album but two: *Exodus* and most of *Kaya*.

TRACKMARKS EXODUS

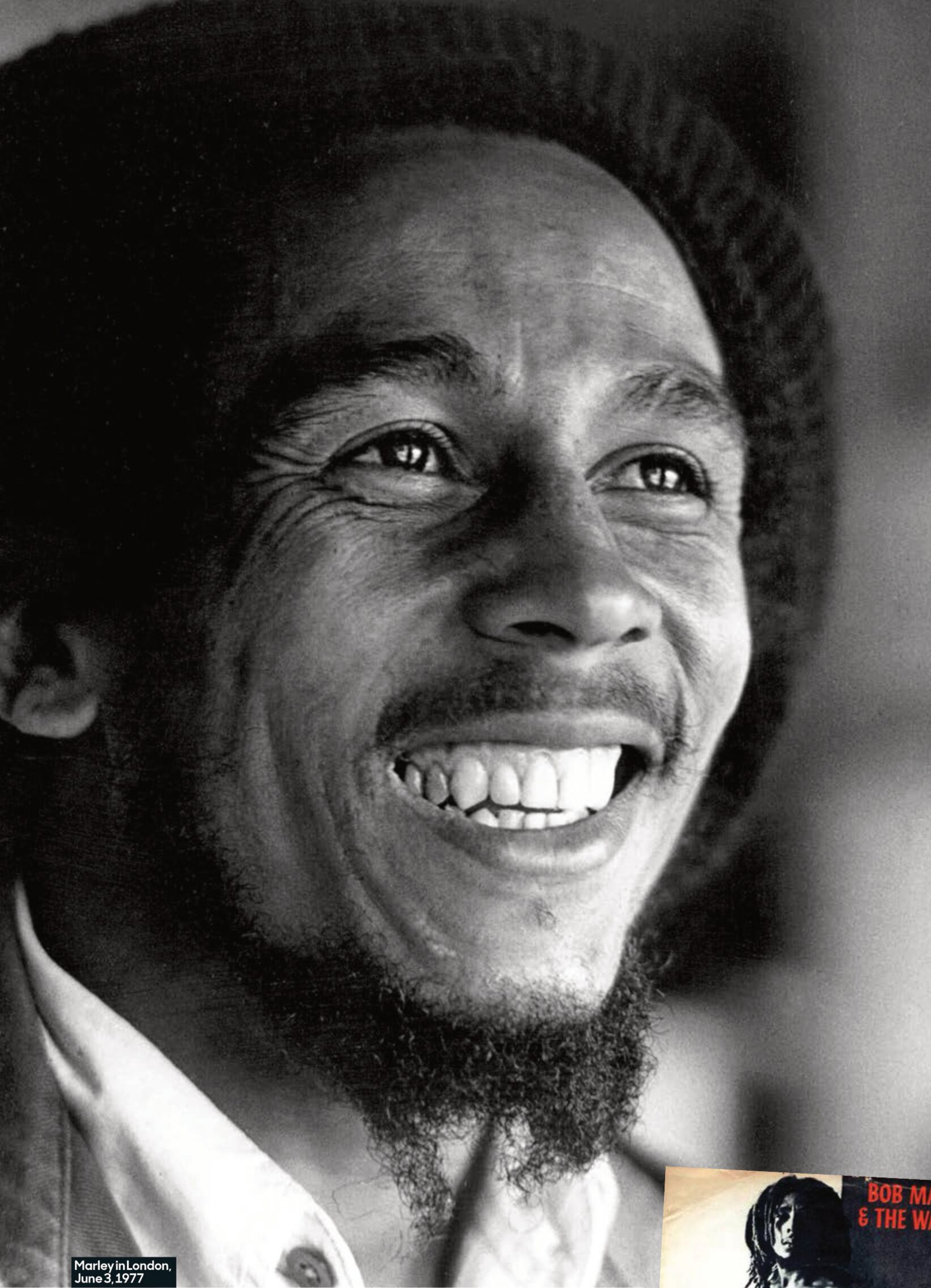
- 1 Natural Mystic ★★★★★
- 2 So Much Things To Say ★★★★★
- 3 Guiltiness ★★★★★
- 4 The Heathen ★★★
- 5 Exodus ★★★★★
- 6 Jamming ★★★★★
- 7 Waiting In Vain ★★★★★
- 8 Turn Your Lights Down Low ★★★★★

- 9 Three Little Birds ★★
- 10 One Love/People Get Ready ★★★★★

Label: Island
Produced by: Bob Marley & The Wailers
Recorded at: Harry J Studio, Kingston, Jamaica; Island Studios, London

Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, guitar, percussion), the I Three – Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt (backing vocals), Aston 'Family Man' Barrett (bass, guitar, percussion), Carlton Barrett (drums, percussion), Junior Marvin (lead

guitar), Tyrone Downie (keyboards, backing vocals), Earl 'Wire' Lindo (keyboards), Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson (percussion), David Madden (trumpet), Glen da Costa (tenor sax), Vin Gordon (trombone)
Highest chart position: UK 8, US 20



Marley in London,
June 3, 1977

With a new lead guitarist (Junior Marvin) in their lineup and a steady stream of love songs flowing from Marley's rented house in Chelsea, the Wailers were able to make *Exodus* a real shake-up after *Rastaman Vibration* – for one thing, the intrusive synthesisers were ditched – and create a category-defying sound that incorporated elements of soul, pop balladry and disco. Once, not so many years earlier, Chris Blackwell had wondered how he was going to get Marley onto the radio. In 1977-'78, as *Exodus* gave Island three UK hits – and as his latest single, “Is This Love”, joined “Jamming” in the Top 40 – Marley probably spent more weeks on Radio 1's playlist than off it. Back in that era when it was rare for albums to feature more than two hit singles, *Exodus* contained four. The rules of

engagement in the music marketing sector would never be quite the same again.

Thanks to Marley's “Waiting In Vain” and “Jamming”, Britain's commercial appetite for reggae was at an all-time high. In the week that “Jamming” peaked at No 9, a song by two Jamaican teenagers, Althea & Donna's “Uptown Top Ranking”, finally toppled Wings' “Mull Of Kintyre” from its two-month monopoly of the No 1 position. Marley, always more of a Lennon than a McCartney, was now capable of writing the catchy, intuitively childlike tunes at which McCartney excelled. It's exalted as a landmark album in political reggae, and rightly so, but for anyone

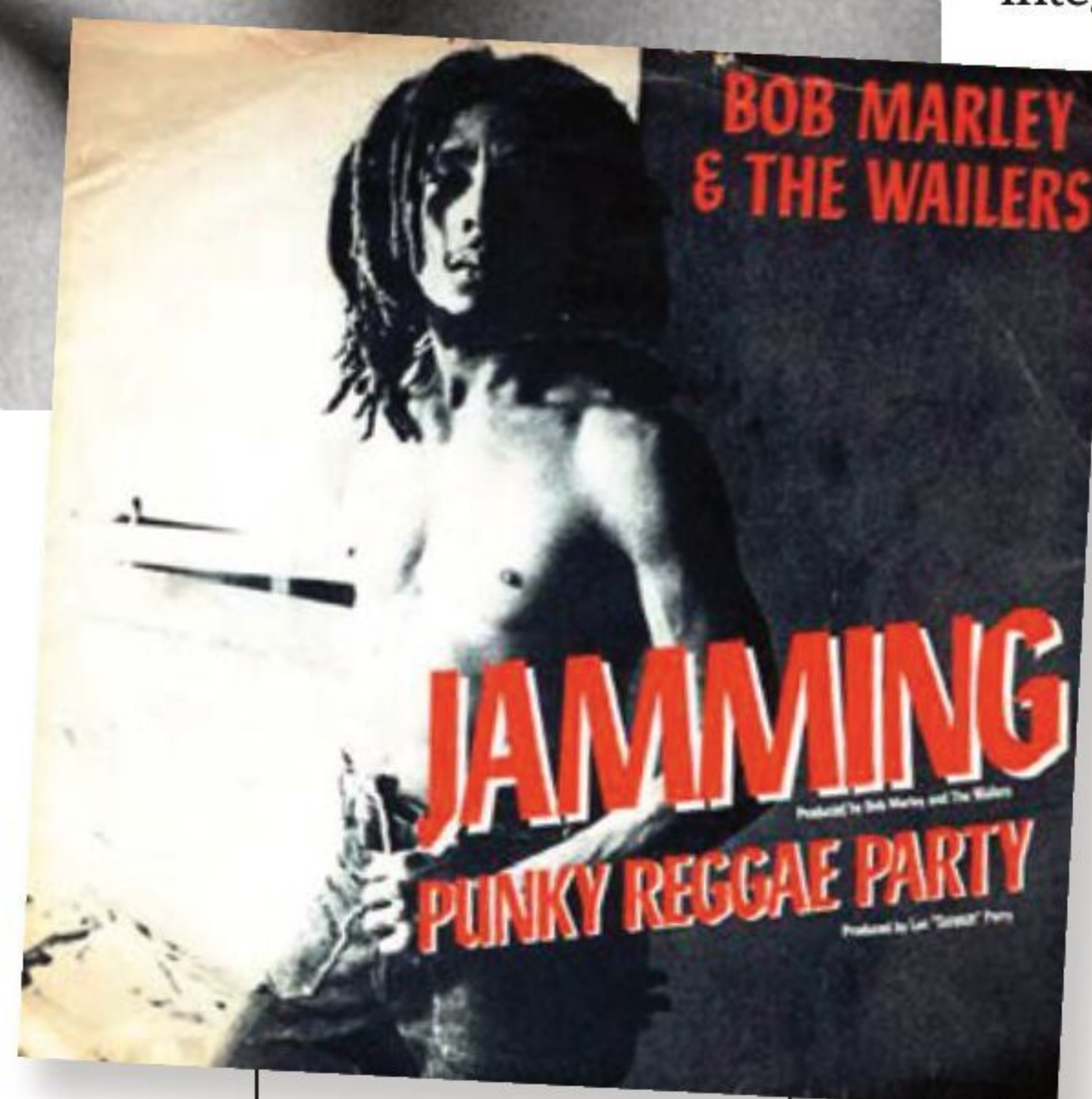
seeking a silly love song or two, *Exodus* wouldn't disappoint.

Though he was more of a serial adulterer than an incurable romantic, and could unleash a violent temper if a woman argued back at him, Marley's love songs revealed an endearing alternative to the didactic sermoniser and the prophet of Armageddon. “Waiting In Vain” was sincerely lovely, as was the smoochy, Gamble & Huff-style “Turn Your Lights Down Low”. In 1999, courtesy of new technology and the blessing of the singer's estate, the latter song was re-released as a unique collaboration between the long-dead Marley and Lauryn Hill, who was in a relationship with one of his sons at the time. Hill, a Wailers aficionado, had recorded most of her first solo LP, *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill*, at Tuff Gong Studios.

For the final two tracks on *Exodus*, Marley combined melodies and sentiments that would reach further and wider than he'd ever reached before. A solid-gold nugget of guileless positivity, “Three Little Birds” was a nursery rhyme crossed with a *Sesame Street* sketch, and had the zest for life of an eight-year-old; it was hard to believe it belonged on the same LP as “The Heathen”. And then, to conclude, Marley revisited and updated an old Wailers song from 1965, “One Love”. The new recording, “One Love/People Get Ready”, was to establish itself by the mid-1980s as a universal anthem par excellence; a hymn of hope to the bereaved and persecuted; a song of praise to an integrated society or at least a

meaningful blueprint of one; and a mandatory inclusion in the repertoires of all community choirs everywhere. After the long struggle to acclimatise western ears to the foreign sounds of Jamaica, “One Love/People Get Ready” was the last piece of the jigsaw slotting into place: the incontestable proof that reggae could now be sung as the music of the world.

On the eve of the *Exodus* tour in May 1977, as he prepared to promote the album around Europe in triumph – and then do likewise in America – Marley suffered a toe injury while playing football in Paris. It didn't seem like an important matter at the time, not compared to what the gun-toting thugs in Kingston had done to him six months earlier. But it was painful. For some reason, the toe wouldn't heal. 🙏



Marley at a
London hotel,
February 2,
1978



**“‘God save
the Queen, her
fascist regime’
– that true!”**

In a plush Kensington flat, Bob Marley salutes the punks, pits Rastafarianism against Catholicism, claims the Queen understands the divine nature of Haile Selassie, and endures the jibes of an occasionally offensive **CHRIS BRAZIER**. “The system want pure love songs like ol’ Frank Sinatra,” Marley contends, “they don’t want not’in wit’ no protest. It make too much trouble.”



MELODY MAKER
11/02/1978

"WE'RE going back to our own land – it says so in The Bible," said the soused Irishman on the Tube to no-one in particular. Which may not seem very significant to you, but, coming as a postscript to an afternoon with Bob Marley, I found it positively unnerving, as if 'Im Up There was giving me a stern warning that everything Marley had said had been right, and woe betide me if I expressed a different opinion.

But I'll just have to take my chances with hellfire, because some of what the Wailer had told me was little short of crazy. We talked in his Kensington flat, part of an incredibly plush block complete with intercom door, Roman balcony, receptionists with the high-fashion nonchalance, on walls clothed with suede rather than paper.

Everything just so, with different shades of brown fusing tastefully. One small step for a white rich kid, perhaps, but a giant leap for an illegitimate half-caste from the slums of Trenchtown.

The first shock about Marley was his sheer incomprehensibility. I was amazed, because, if anyone's pointed it out before then they certainly haven't done so with enough force – as he ushered me down the corridor and through his door, colourfully clad in a robe, and a red woollen hat locking up his dreadful hair (sorry), he spouted two or three sentences at me, presumably of welcome, of which I understood not one word.

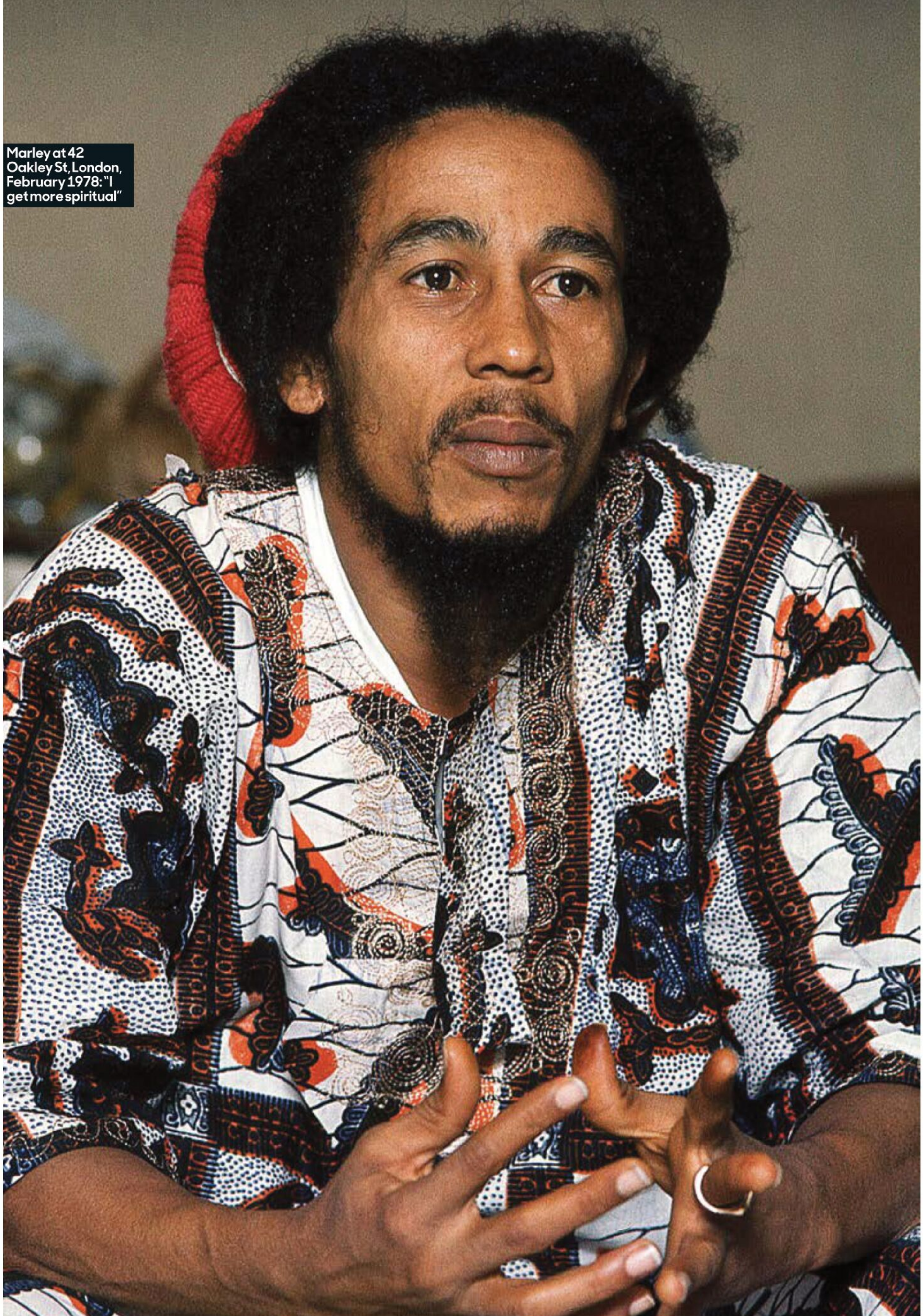
That set a precedent for the whole interview – his words tumble over and slur into one another in careless defiance of conventional tense and syntax. I suppose he must have considerably diluted the Jamaican patois in my honour, but even on tape some passages are indecipherable, and while he was sitting opposite me I couldn't have understood more than about a third of what he was saying – just enough to get his drift and feign comprehension. That in itself was unsettling, making me feel very much an alien, especially when Marley's friends started to arrive in force and sat and smoked over the other side of the room.

The second surprising thing was his volubility. I'd somehow expected a kind of quiet sage, exuding a serenity won both by the believed perception of an ultimate (and peaceful) truth, and by the constant inhalation of the sacred herb. Instead, I was confronted by a passionate bundle of garrulousness who left me conscious of the absurdity of some of his thinking, rather than impressing with his general perception.

Because, you see, his verbosity is completely one-dimensional, emerging entirely out of his bottomless faith in Rastafarianism (which, for the uninitiated, sees black people as a kind of modern equivalent of the Israelites, their Canaan being Africa, and their God being incarnated in the form of the late Emperor Of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie). No matter what question I asked, his reply would always veer back towards Rasta, simply because he sees that faith as holding the ultimate answer to every doubt or query.

As he said when I asked if he thought being born of a black mother and a white father (a British naval captain) had had much of an effect upon his consciousness: "It make me fully Rasta, nothing else but Rasta. Because me depend not on the white

Marley at 42
Oakley St, London,
February 1978: "I
get more spiritual"



"MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE PEOPLE NO LIKE BLACK PEOPLE..."

BOB MARLEY

man's side nor the black man's side but Rasta. Me just completely committed to Rasta."

He's the exact equivalent of a newly converted but devoted Christian, or of a committed Communist – people who believe they've discovered the only important truth and are virtually incapable of talking about anything else. His monomania is at times quite frightening, perhaps because, as Joseph Conrad

claimed, "a man haunted by a fixed idea is insane".

But it is disturbing mainly because, to these ears at least (and just possible, I'm merely falling victim to the long-established middle-class tradition of narrow-minded distrust of fervour), he believes so wholeheartedly in ideas which seem quite absurd.

Now I don't want to knock the Rastafarian faith just for the sake of it, since without it many Jamaicans probably wouldn't have 'stood up for their rights', but the deification of Haile Selassie in itself has always struck me as ridiculous.

So Bob and I don't exactly have much common ground. At one point during the interview, Marley stood to attention in front of a portrait of Selassie which was propped up against the wall, a scene that drove home the absurdity at the same time as it made me feel uncomfortable, wondering if I was expected to follow suit.

A lot of what he said, particularly early on, was both true and acute. But, for me, the madness of some of his statements had thrown doubt upon the rest.

Routine questions first, I asked whether the new

album, *Kaya*, to be released in March, was very different to *Exodus*.

"Yeah, it sound a bit different, but not that much different, same musicians an' everyt'ing."

Are there any love songs on it this time?

"Yeah, man, couple-a love songs... Three."

Are those love songs part of your overall message?

"Yeah, love is all in the message. Love on life. People's personal feelings towards love an' all them t'ing. If we sing like 'Rastaman Vibration' all the time, everythin' get too political an' the people don't really wanna be that much political, y'know."

"Them wanna understand where we're going still, but them still wanna live a normal life – that mean they wanna hear about love. The politics really not important to them, but love come a bit easier. It more easier for people."

But do you see yourself writing more love songs as you get older, becoming less obviously radical?

"Nah, not really – I get more spiritual. Like this one, 'Time Will Tell' – more spiritual." (He points to the last song on the new lyric-sheet.)

Does that mean you'll be less militant?

"No. You see, you sing a song like 'Get Up, Stand Up', a protest song, it was like three years ago. If today me sing a song with the same meaning as 'Get Up, Stand Up', then me singing same song, repeating myself."

"The young-young don't wanna hear nothing about politics an' them t'ing, they wanna hear 'bout Rastafari, somethin' that can 'elp'im. Pure politics can hurt certain people, so you 'ave to get hard, get soft, 'cos guns don't argue, an' if you talk too much an' get too strong they'll kill ya because Babylon set up own system an' it no want nobody come change it."

"So is not everyt'ing you can talk 'bout 'cos them kill ya. So you have to sing a 'true love' song an' then go back to what you wanna sing otherwise them kill ya. Yeah, man. The system want pure love songs like ol' Frank Sinatra, they don't want not'in wit' no protest, it make too much trouble."

Sounds remarkably like the power pop syndrome to me. I explained to Marley how the current men of the moment in Britain are wearing suits, scrubbing their faces, and singing pretty slush for the family. "Ah, them forced to do it," he commented.

Oh? Who by?

"The system, man. But that no gon' work." He did elucidate, but I couldn't suss out what he said.

So you'd never make a whole album full of love songs?

"No, man, we never do that. One or two love songs for the people who need to know 'bout Rasta. Them buy the record for the love song an' them will automatically learn 'bout Rasta. The young-young lickie girl buy this for 'Is This Love', but in the meanwhile she can hear, 'Jah would never give the power to a baldhead', 'Running Away', 'Sun Is Shining', and 'The Crisis'."

"So it still have the message, but it go to more people. We don't specialise in people – if Arabs and Chinese wanna buy it, we are glad. We know that all people is Rasta, but them don't know because the education change that, education tell you what them want you to be."

Since he thought that there was a danger of repeating himself in his protest songs even now, I wondered if he still imagined himself singing in 20 years' time.

"I see myself settled in Africa in eight years' time. We will settle an' all place like England, Ireland, start run good. Everything change, everybody does know the truth an' everybody does live it. It gonna be a big t'ing 'cos we gonna be united – we don't want no 'if'. My people will be united."

At this point, the burning idealism seems desperate – Utopia in eight years or bust. The man is so totally sincere that he's carried me with him up to now. But around here things start getting a little screwy.

"We never just say Africa because we wan' a land to live in or somet'ing like that, we say Africa because it's really true. It's not the people that are the trouble, y'know? It's the lies, the lies. Y'know, His Majesty come to England, an' when He come here them treat 'im good, good, good. But how them treat the Rastaman? We His Majesty's soldiers, but them try kill me."

"When Haile Selassie come, he given great welcome, but when we say we defend Rastafari, them people kill ya. That is a nasty t'ing, y'know, because when you check out on The Bible it say that God shall return King Of Kings, Lord Of Lords, Conqueror, Lion Of Judah – Him our God, but them treat Rastaman bad. All the police them weird."

Note the apparent paranoid exaggeration – the 'system' is out to kill black people by means of a calculated plot. This is a constant theme of Marley's. Could it perhaps have its origin in the shooting incident of 1976 when someone attempted to murder him, probably for seeming to lend his support to Socialist Premier Michael Manley's election campaign? I pointed out to him that, on the evidence of the recent riot in Wolverhampton alone, Rastas are not the only black people facing problems in Britain now.

"All black people are Rasta. The reason them not is 'cos them need t'ings to eat, an' need to work. If you could still go in a place an' get work as Rasta then everyone is Rasta. But like it is you won't get no work, an' if you not talented then you can't be like this, you forced to be somet'ing else. If everybody was free to be what them want, man, then everyone be Rasta."

Which is a pretty... um... debatable point. But Marley sincerely believes it, and almost unbelievably, seemed to regard what follows as an adequate justification of his point, a demonstration of the innate superiority of Rastafarianism to Catholicism (there appear to be no other possibilities open to us, not even Protestantism).

"What you need to understand," he explained, "is that you 'ave Rome an' you 'ave Ethiopia. Rome deal wit' force, Rome force you to do what it want. But the ways of His Majesty is natural ways. He never come stick a gun at you an' say 'You must say Our Father's prayers.' When you pray to the Babylon God, you pray to Rome, that means all your imagination is when you walk in the street an' t'ink of a great

pretty city. So Et'iochia right an' Rome wrong."

Whaaat! Conjures up some pretty pictures, though, doesn't it? Cardinals with knives between their teeth, priests with bandoliers, stun guns in the Vatican... Too many Inquisition horror stories at an impressionable age?

LET'S come down to something a bit more concrete, Bob. What do you think of the National Front?

"Some prejudiced people who no want the black man here. Let me ask you somet'ing – who encourage this t'ing?"

No-one encourages it. "Yeah, man. Somebody encourage it. There's not'ing happening out there that somebody don't encourage. If you see somebody getting' up a fight against black people, you know this guy got orders from big big place or from low low place. But if them look on us as inferior species, we look on them at not'ing. Them got no right to look on people as inferior. That nasty – the people who run the country should know they're wrong."

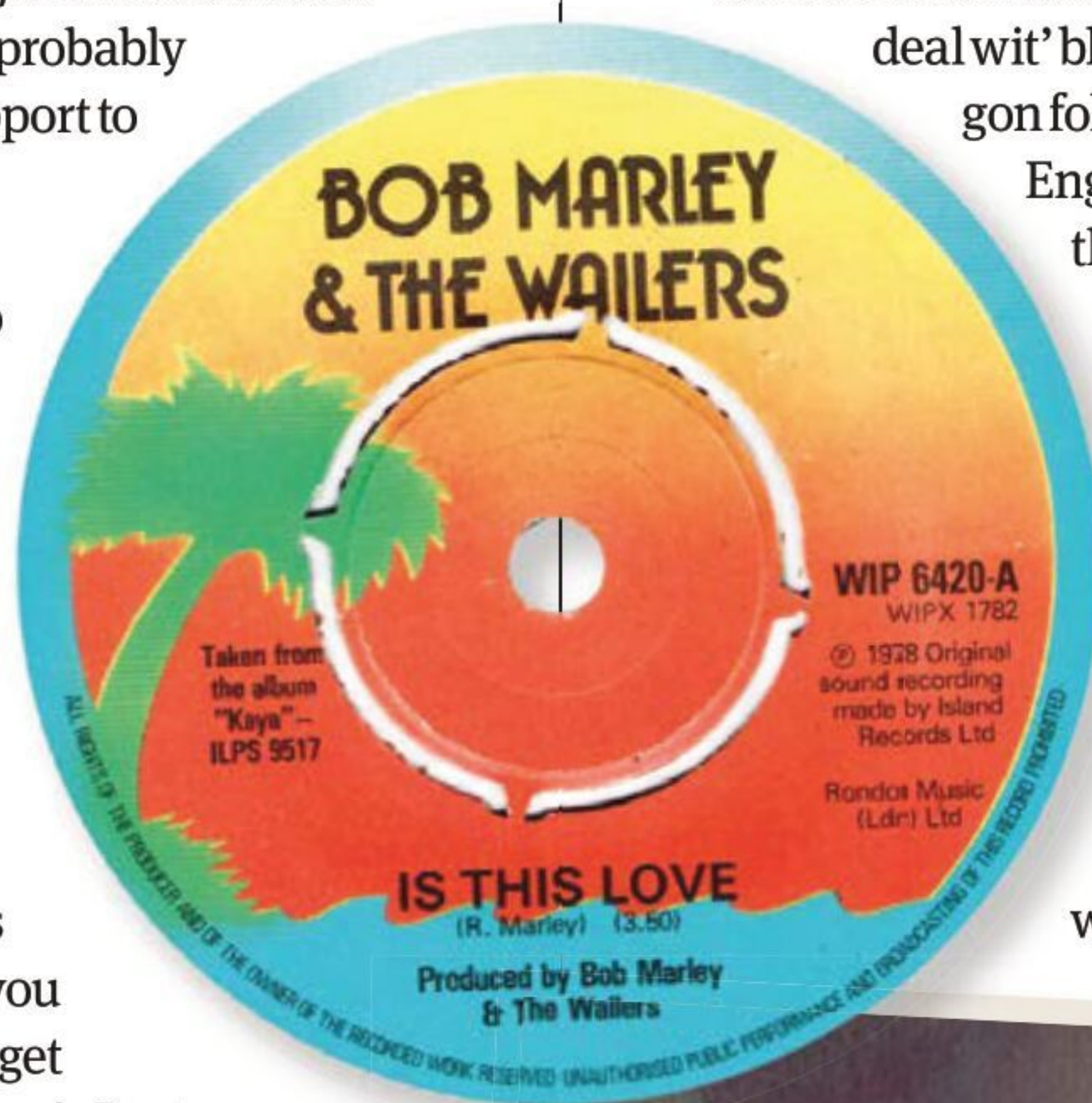
Oh, they know they're wrong...

"I no wanna talk 'bout English Government, you know why? The English Government is good an' it is bad." (Totally incomprehensible rant for at least a minute.)

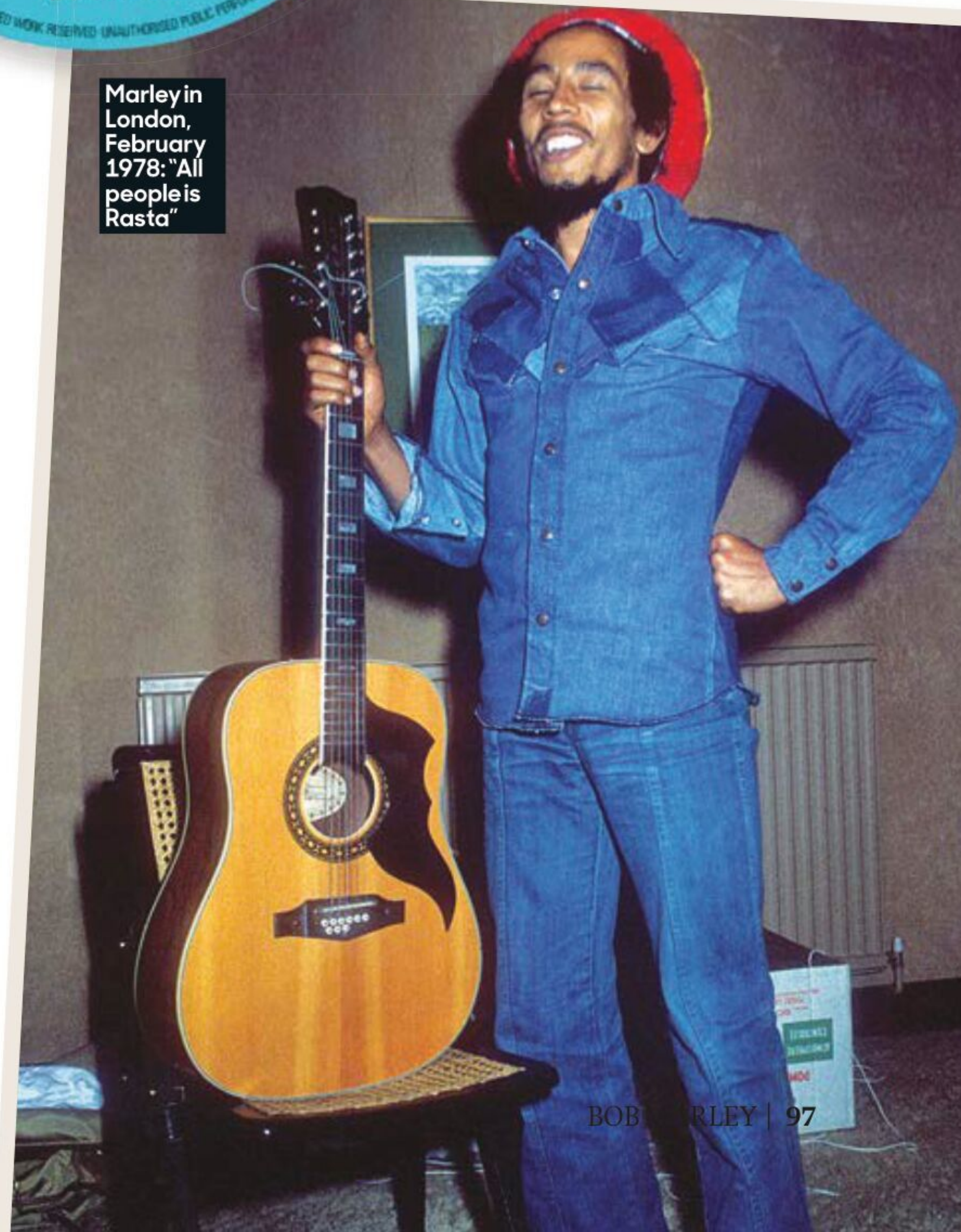
"And now them come an' say we gonna kick you out an' it's them who brought you to that bloodclaat land as slaves. Them'll get fokked. Them can't deal wit' black people like that, they gon fok' themselves. Y'know,

England should go on better than that, that bloodclaat dumb – why them no work as slaves for us in return? Really bad men, bad people, bullies.

"The ways of the black man is right, an' the ways of the white man wrong. The way the white man set up him system is wrong – the only right ➤



Marley in London, February 1978: "All people is Rasta"



t'ing is Haile Selassie." (Followed by another indecipherable outburst. 'Bloodclaat', incidentally, is a cute Jamaican obscenity derived from the blood-cloth or sanitary towel.)

"This guy, them National Front, them not please the people – it's just politics, man, making the politics a bit more hotter."

So they don't worry you? (Outraged rant.)

"Worry me? Bloodclaat them won't fok wit' me, them bloodclaat, I'll give them pure war an' if it's pure war then it's pure riot so them better stop that. Fok them. Me personally not agree wit' no-one fighting one another – me no agree wit' a white man fight a white man, no a white man go fight a black man, no a black man go fight a black man. But the police don't pass by a murder on the street. The National Front, them do bad things, why nobody no stop them? That mean them agree wit' it."

But Bob...

"Middle-class white people no like black people. One or two of them like black people. They gonna fok them bloodclaat selves again. We come into the West as slaves an' after we done slavery them say, 'Take the chain offa them, but don't give them enough money.'

"They make it so that them don't have enough money to go back to Africa. Black people is Rasta, 'cos if you go to Queen Elizabeth, or any one of them big guys here wit' intelligence an' ask them properly, 'Who really is Haile Selassie?' then them tell ya."

What will they tell me?

"Them gon' say him come from Solomon an' David, him King Of Et'io'pia, the same as God."

What! You mean you honestly think they believe Haile Selassie is God?

"Them will no say he's God, but you can understand it from what they say."

But... but... surely they'd just think of him as King Of Ethiopia? "Yeah, but the King Of Ethiopia is God." To you maybe, but not to them or to me...

"Not to the Queen? You never can tell. His Majesty went to school wit' King George, an' at school His Majesty draw bird an' the bird fly off the paper an' him say, 'Hey I gonna free the black people'."

IT'S still a little difficult to believe that Marley could be so deluded by his obsession as to think that anyone with intelligence, even old Lizzie, knows deep down that Haile Selassie is God. If ever I was given a warning about the dangers of single-minded commitment, then this was it.

It was time for a change of tack. In the light of the B-side of "Jammin", "Punky Reggae Party", I asked him how much sympathy he had felt with punk.

"Listen, punk love reggae. Punk love reggae music an' some of them say t'ings that Babylon no like, right, them right! Me give them 900 per cent right! Because them can do it. Them no hard like we, them no tough like we, them couldn't see what we sees, but they resist the society an' say, 'me a punk 'cos I don't want you to shove me where I don't like it, it no good for me, I gon' be something different'.

"Them not as much followers of Babylon, make up their mind for themselves – that great. While other people go on under the same system, go on like everyday people. I no care 'bout them. But the punk now different. He come on a different t'ing

– freaky freaky different. If them were black them were Rasta, if them were white them were punk. Them is no Rasta, but them fight down the Babylon system an' them love black people an' reggae an' hate the National Front.

"Check the National Front an' check the punk. Which of them defending the right thing? To me, the punk. The National Front are fokry, they are people who get pay for doin' them t'ing."

Who pays them?

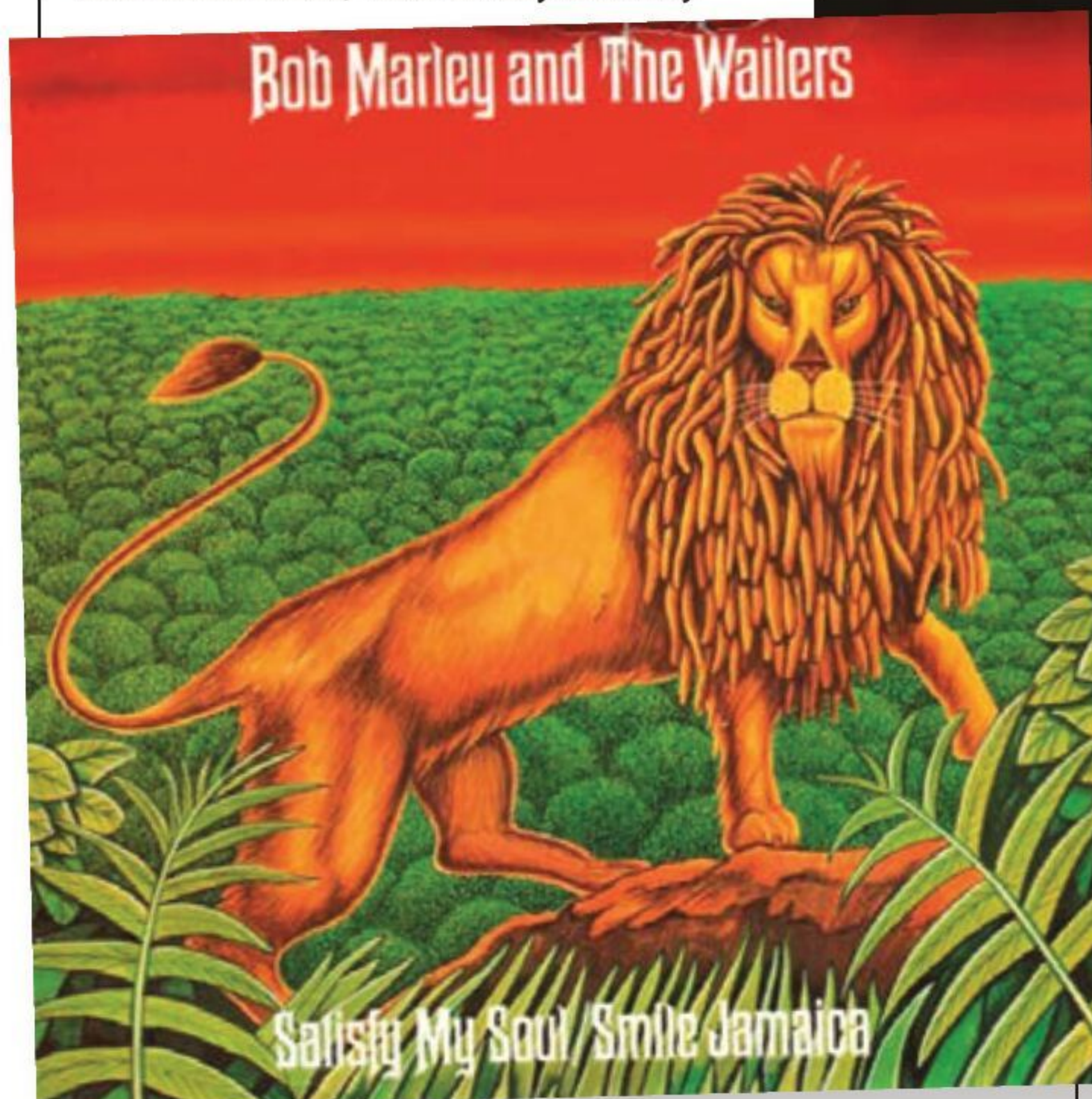
"The Government pay them to do it, man. It's planned. Somebody tell 'em to fock up black people."

Hmmm... full circle.

What do you think of the actual punk music?

"Well, me like the punk. The music – me no listen t'everyt'ing, but certain type of foolishness, but 'God save the Queen, her fascist regime' – that true. Ah dig the punk for that. Me like 'Police And T'ieves', too. Them different, y'know. Them wanna get together wit' Rastaman an' get working together instead of him feel inferior.

"Because him no feel like we inferior – white man feel inferior to the black man, that's why him try



kill the black man. An' the punk say, 'No! We wanna join wit' the Rastaman an' get somet'ing outta life'.

"Y'know, white people come to our concerts, so when them come out of the street an' find them separated from black people again they need a Rasta friend whom they can talk to an' hear 'bout the real t'ing. We know everyt'ing 'bout England and America, but not Africa."

At which point he skids back into Rasta via another incomprehensible spurt, ending up with a lecture on the 12 tribes of Israel and the ethnic significance of the three sons of Noah(!). All very enlightening, but what do you think of the explosion of young British reggae bands?

"More reggae, mon. More power for the people, that's what it mean."

But some of those bands are avoiding singing about Rastafari... He stares at me in disbelief for a

Marley in his Chelsea flat in 1978 with a portrait of Haile Selassie (left)



second. "You don't sing 'bout Rastafari, nobody wanna hear ya, we no interested in ya."

Maybe the Jamaican public wouldn't be, but why shouldn't the English? "But everyt'ing a man do mas' have meaning behind it, man."

But Rastafari isn't the only possible meaning until the consciousness come true. "Tell them 'bout Rastafari, man."

But aren't protest songs like "Get Up, Stand Up" valid independently of Rasta?

"No – if they sing them then, they must belong to a political group."

But they don't.

"Then they must be Rasta. Otherwise what rights they gon' stand up for?"

And the rights you talk about are the rights to be a natural man? "Yeah, natural man. An' a natural man in touch wit' God is a Rastaman. Because truth is truth, earth is earth, an' a natural man is a Rastaman" – you can't get away from the subject when you're talking to Bob Marley at least.

Rasta has gained something of a reputation for antipathy to the liberation of women. So what do you think of the Women's Movement, Bob?

"The one t'ing you need to know; man is man,



woman is woman. The Devil tried colour prejudice, now he try woman against man.”

But do you regard women as equal to men?
“I don’t see women as equal or unequal – woman is woman. She no equal to me because she can ’ave children an’ I cannot ’ave.”

Is that her only function in life to you? “That’s how she function. Me know no man who ’ave big belly an’ have child.” (Predictable laughter.)

“Woman must always be respected an’ dear. It not even somet’ing we must talk of. ’Cos me have a mother who is a woman.” (Adds, laughing) “But me ’ave a father who is God.”

Can you conceive of a female God?
(Adamant). “Woman can’t be God. It just not natural, it no happen.”

YOU haven’t been back to Jamaica for a long time – why not? “Jamaica important, but my life more important. Me no gonna go back to Jamaica to set myself up as a target again, for the Government, the Opposition, or anyone else. My life mean more than that.”

So you’ve been living in Miami? “Yeah, me live wit’ my mother. You see, the people in Jamaica love

“AS LONG AS ME ’AVE MY HERB AN’ MY GUITAR ME CAN LIVE ANYWHERE”

me too much. And should the politicians find that out now, them try to get close to me, to use me an’ stop Rasta spreading at the same time.

“You know *Rastaman Vibration* banned in Jamaica? Bloodclaat. England should have banned it, not Jamaica. But them can’t stop Rasta.”

Yawn. But in white, middle-aged, upper-class Miami can you still feel in touch with Trenchtown slum-dwellers who have meant so much to you?

“Me always live, but not among the people. As long as me ’ave my herb an’ my guitar me

can live anywhere, it make no difference.”

But doesn’t living in luxury make any difference?
“Me no see things lush or posh here. If this were a hillside wit’ sun an’ grass, that me call lush ’n’ posh, that me really love.”

Does money mean anything to you? “The only t’ing money mean right now is if you ’ave enough you can build a school. Nothing more than that.”

What do you think of “Uptown Top Ranking”?
“Them little girl all right, them lucky. It’s what I try to encourage. ‘Top Ranking’ nice but say nothing.” Sounds like the power pop syndrome again...

“That’s it. Yeah man, that’s it.”

Which just about wound up the conversation. On the way out, it occurred to me to clarify one point. You say you’ll be settled in Africa within eight years? “Rastafari say by 1983 Africa must be free. His Majesty say that.” And if it isn’t? “If not, the whole world must perish.” You really believe that? “Yeah – all Him say must come true.” So what would you do if, in 1985, Africa wasn’t free and the whole world hadn’t perished? “I would perish it myself.” It may have been as much at the ridiculousness of the idea Haile Selassie could be wrong as at anything else, but at least he laughed when he said that. 

KAYA

RELEASED 23 MARCH 1978

A sell-out? Or a serene ritual to keep Babylon at bay? Bob Marley chills out.

BY LOUIS PATTISON

IN 1978 the word was that Bob Marley had gone soft. Arriving nine months after the release of his holy, poetic masterwork *Exodus*, *Kaya* – a Jamaican slang term for marijuana – felt distinctly laid-back. Opening with a song titled “Easy Skanking” and touching gently on themes of love, family and getting high, the album’s apparent slightheadedness raised some critical hackles. The critic Lester Bangs, never the sort to sugar-coat his opinions, wrote in the pages of *Rolling Stone* that “musically, *Kaya* is a succession of the most tepid reggae clichés”, adding that Marley sang in a “cheerful lilt light bouncy enough for pantyhose commercials”, comparing it negatively to roots groups Burning Spear and Toots & The Maytals, and intimating that the whole affair was that most repellent of things in the punk rock year of ’78: another so-called rebel selling out the underground.

But if these songs sometimes gave an impression of Bob Marley in a place of cosseted bliss, the truth was quite different. At the dawn of 1978, Marley’s personal life was, to put it mildly, strained. Following the injury to his toe, he had been diagnosed with a malignant melanoma. A Harley Street doctor recommended the toe be amputated, but Marley refused, partly on religious grounds – a devotee of the all-natural Rastafari practice of Ital, he preferred natural remedies – but also, according to Junior Marvin, because he

didn’t want to lose the ability to play his beloved football. Instead he opted for a simpler procedure – a little surgery and a skin graft.

Meanwhile, Marley’s romantic life was certainly turbulent. Under the nose of his wife, Rita, he was dating the Jamaican Miss World, Cindy Breakspeare, and there were other dalliances, too – with Breakspeare’s chaperone Nancy Burke, with her sister, Virginia Burke, and with Princess Yashi, the daughter of Libya’s oil minister. The *Kaya* track “She’s Gone” is a mournful lament to a lover who, wearied of “the pressure” around Marley, has packed her bags and left. But it doesn’t seem to correspond to any definable romantic rupture in Marley’s actual life, and its imagery of prisons and jailers indicated a truth about his attitude to relationships: that marriage and fidelity were traps to be avoided, and a heart’s desire was something to be indulged, not suppressed.

Still, if Marley was living in the moment, perhaps that was understandable. The past couple of years had no doubt done much to engender a sense of mortality in the singer and his retinue. In the February of that year, mere weeks before *Kaya*’s worldwide release, Marley returned from 16 months of exile to war-torn Kingston to prepare for April’s One Love Peace Concert, a fundraiser for the poverty-stricken West Kingston ghetto. Dubbed by the media the “Third World Woodstock”, One Love was the brainchild of rival gangsters Claudius ‘Claudie’ Massop and Aston ‘Bucky’ Marshall, who met in a ➤



**"MAYBE IF I'D TRIED
TO MAKE A HEAVIER
TUNE THAN KAYA
THEY WOULD
HAVE TRIED TO
ASSASSINATE ME"**

prison cell and decided music was the key to healing the conflict. The pair had flown to London to persuade Marley to play the event, which brought together many of the island's biggest musicians, plus a political fraternity who, in the streets, might have one another in the crosshairs. Marley saw a chance to end the bloodshed, and during a climactic take on "Jammin'", he invited rival politicians Michael Manley of the People's National Party and Edward Seaga of the Jamaica Labour Party up onstage, bringing their hands together in an expression of unity.

Sadly, the powerful symbolism of One Love did not materially change the reality on the ground; the street fighting continued, with almost 400 people killed in Jamaica in 1978 alone. Meanwhile, the return to the island offered reminders that Marley was a marked man. Chris Salewicz, author of *Bob Marley: The Untold Story*, relates an event that occurred shortly after the Peace Concert. Bob Marley and his manager, Don Taylor, met with the Jamaican gangster Earl 'Tek-Life' Wadley, who took them to McGregor Gully in the Kingston ganglands. There they found three men, tied and bound. The story was that these men had been recruited by the CIA to assassinate Marley the year before. Two were hanged, and Marley was offered a gun to finish off the third. He refused.

With all this in mind, *Kaya*'s soft and balmy qualities take on a different character. For Rastafarians, marijuana is the "healing herb", a key tool in religious ceremonies, used to induce trance-like states, generate feelings of unity and soothe the soul. With this in mind, *Kaya* could be read as a sort of ritual or prayer – a collection of songs of peace and serenity to keep Babylon at bay. Even so, throughout we can hear something darker poking through the gaps, a glimpse of

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Marley has refined his art to a degree of exceptional purity. The sentiments he expresses are often so simple, so direct that they positively ache with emotion. The ability to beautify the banal is a rare gift, and one that Marley doesn't abuse."
ANGUS MACKINNON
NME, MARCH 18, 1978

thunderclouds on the horizon. "Excuse me while I light my spliff," begins "Easy Skanking". But there is a subtle tension at play here, Marley's mind caught between blissful repose and the troubles that he smokes to suppress: "Oh, God, I gotta take a lift/From reality I just can't drift," he sings, shadowed by a gently nagging I Three chorus line. The title track states it even more plainly. "Woke up and turn I loose," he sings, "Cos the rain is falling."

Whatever significance you load onto *Kaya*, it's worth remembering that its tracks were principally recorded during the extraordinarily productive *Exodus* sessions over a year before, while three of the tracks – "Kaya", "Sun Is Shining" and "Satisfy My

KAYA FEELS LIKE A NECESSARY MOMENT OF CALM

Soul" – appear in earlier form on the Lee 'Scratch' Perry-produced 1971 album *Soul Revolution*. Still, there is little sense that *Kaya* is a collection of offcuts. Its 10 songs form part of a clear whole, the militant bounce of *Exodus* replaced by something more horizontal, defined by the Barretts' gently skanking rhythms, Junior Marvin's bluesy guitar, and restrained brass lines courtesy of sax player Vin Gordon and

trumpeters Glen DaCosta and David Madden. Its distinct sound, meanwhile, is at least in part down to the mix, which took place at Criteria Sound in Miami – a studio that had shepherded into life some of the key AOR of the age, including The Eagles' *Hotel California*, Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, and a number of '70s albums by The Bee Gees.

The key track here is "Is This Love". Not for nothing was this chosen as the opener to *Legend*. It remains one of the 20th century's most beloved love songs, so simple as to sound virtually effortless, but with a message that resonates universally. Why has it weathered so well? There is something pure in its doe-eyed adoration, gorgeously pitched backing vocals, a lovely little moment in the chorus where a shred of doubt resolves as full commitment. But the answer is perhaps to be found in its sense of humility, the way it glimpses an almost religious contentment in matters so simple and homely – in food and shelter, a shared single bed and thanks to Jah.

While resident in London, Marley made a little-seen video for the track at the Keskidee Centre, a former Victorian mission hall revived as an arts centre, which under the stewardship of figures like the poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, had become one of the UK's main hubs for black cultural expression. The shoot itself was themed as a children's party, Marley playing a sort of dreadlocked Pied Piper figure leading a multi-racial group of kids in play. Among them was a seven-year-old Naomi Campbell, who later remembered Marley as "the most handsome man, with beautiful bone structure... mellow, too, and soft-spoken." Also present on the day was photographer Adrian Boot, whose shot of Marley posed wearing Haile Selassie's signet ring would later grace the cover of *Legend*.

The following track, "Sun Is Shining", finds its definitive take here, becoming a sleek and soulful thing that balances its paradisiacal lyric ("Sun is shining, the weather is sweet/Make you want to move your dancing feet...") with a lingering melancholy, Marley's voice booming and a little ragged and Marvin teasing out weepy blues licks. Seldom played live in Marley's lifetime, its popularity has increased over the years. A popular 1999 club remix by the Danish house producer Funkstar De Luxe drained the track of any nuance, but at least served to shine a little light back on the original. Meanwhile, "Satisfy My Soul" – which appeared as "Don't Rock My Boat" on *Soul Revolution* – is conducted to a soft, padding beat with gently bumping brass that feels deliberately light and breezy, as if to contrast with the dub-encrusted weight of Perry's original.

If *Kaya*'s first half contains little glimpses of trouble in paradise, on its second side the strife and stress become more pronounced. Following on the heels of the heartbroken "She's Gone" is "Misty Morning", a sunless

Sun is shining:
Marley live in 1978



Big band reggae: Bob Marley & The Wailers and The I-Three, 1978

skank that might be a plea to a departed lover, or a prayer to Jah. Cryptic where much of *Kaya* is fairly straightforward, its bright horns and rattling snare fills carry a lyric filled with elliptical Rasta wisdom. “How can you ever give your more to receive your less?” asks Marley, before noting: “Like my good friend said, in a reggae riddim/You can’t jump, you can’t jump in the water, if you can’t swim.” “Crisis” is a cry of pain for the victims of conflict, probably inspired by the gangland violence tearing Jamaica apart, but designed to be applicable to anywhere where the strong perpetuate violence on the weak. Meanwhile, on the surface “Running Away” feels like an address to the critics who accused him of abandoning Jamaica in his months of exile – but there is something more at work here. In places the tone feels almost self-lacerating, the I Three’s backing vocals take on an admonishing quality, and Marley begins arguing with the voices, pleading with them. “Ya running and ya running,” he confesses at one point, “But ya can’t run away from yourself.”

The closing “Time Will Tell” perhaps sums up the conundrum of *Kaya*, a deeply personal, often pressured album in which most negativity is subsumed amid a haze of good feeling. “Jah would never give the power to a baldhead/Run come crucify the Dread,” preaches Marley, before referencing the details of his attempted assassination (“Oh children weep no more/

Oh my sycamore tree, saw the freedom tree”) and concluding the song with a chanted “Think you’re in heaven, but you’re living in hell...” that feels like a hex cast on his enemies. But its delivery – a gentle, cyclical Rasta hymn with hand percussion – ensures that, for the bulk of Marley’s Western audience, such complexities would be missed. Lester Bangs heard in *Kaya*’s chilled invocations of spliff and love the vain decadence of the rock star. Undoubtedly, he was missing something. But if Marley’s message would later be watered down to something platitudinous and unthreatening – stoner anthems for student digs – then *Kaya* was at least partly to blame. Yet it shouldn’t be dismissed so easily. Landing between the epochal *Exodus* and the following, defiant *Survival*, *Kaya* feels like a necessary moment of calm. Humble and

introspective, it’s best interpreted as an attempt to find peace from a place of exile, a collection of little prayers to keep the evils of the world at bay. Maybe it makes sense that the final word on the album should be Marley’s own. “Me always militant... me too militant,” he told one interviewer. “That’s why me did things like *Kaya*, to cool off the pace. Maybe if I’d tried to make a heavier tune than *Kaya* they would have tried to assassinate me because I would have come too hard. “I have to know how to run my life, because that’s what I have, and nobody can tell me to put it on the line, you dig? I know when I am in danger and what to do to get out. I know when everything is cool and I know when I tremble, do you understand? Because music is something everyone follows... it’s a force, a terrible force.”

TRACKMARKS KAYA

1 Easy Skanking ★★★	Released: 1978 Label: Tuff Gong/Island Produced by: Bob Marley & The Wailers Recorded at: Harry J Studio, Kingston, Jamaica/Island Studios, London Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, rhythm and acoustic guitar, percussion), Aston 'Family Man' Barrett (bass, percussion), Carlton Barrett (drums, percussion), Tyrone Downie (keyboards, percussion), Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson (percussion), Junior Marvin (lead guitar), Rita Marley (backing vocals), Marcia Griffiths (backing vocals), Judy Mowatt (backing vocals), Vin Gordon (sax), Glen DaCosta (trumpet), David Madden (trumpet) Highest chart position: UK 4, US 50
2 Kaya ★★★	
3 Is This Love ★★★★★	
4 Sun Is Shining ★★★★★	
5 Satisfy My Soul ★★★	
6 She's Gone ★★★	
7 Misty Morning ★★★	
8 Crisis ★★★	
9 Running Away ★★★★★	
10 Time Will Tell ★★★	

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"The world will be watching"



The Wailers at The One Love Peace Concert, Kingston, with Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley (far left) and political opponent Edward Seaga (third from left)

Back in Jamaica for the first time since the attempt on his life, Bob Marley presides over a significant moment in the island's history: a peace concert where he will reconcile warring political factions. **NEIL SPENCER** is on hand to explain a dangerous truce, and to witness a concert showcasing the cream of reggae talent. "Every country," proclaims Marley, "must follow our example!"





NME
6/5/1978

AT THE GATEWAY of 56 Hope Road, Kingston, a small triangular Ethiopian flag flutters on the lazy tropical breeze as a police car butts its snout into the driveway of the sprawling house and pauses to survey the scene. Through the small crowds that clutter the yard in busy inactivity, the diminutive figure of Bob

Marley marches towards the car with raised palm and halts the cops who are now standing looking over at the house toying with a pair of brutal-looking rifles. A brief exchange of words and the car slides away in reverse as Marley marches into the road to direct traffic and ease their departure.

Time and success, it seems, do change and mellow a man. Having lived most of his early life in conflict with the authorities, Marley now finds the authorities working for him. Yes me frien', dem set me free again. For the Trenchtown rocker who 10 years ago extolled the virtues of the joys of life as a downtown Kingston Rude Boy and who, seven years back, wrote "Duppy Conqueror" on release from jail (after a traffic offence), times have indeed changed.

For undoubtedly the Kingston police and militia are under directives from above that everything possible be done to ensure the success of tomorrow's massive Peace Concert, where Marley will star alongside former Wailer Peter Tosh, and – so it is rumoured – Bunny Wailer, third of the original Wailers triumvirate.

Also playing will be an almost inconceivable collection of the cream of Jamaican music talent, all of whom will be giving their services free with concert proceeds going to "improvement projects in the ghettos" as designated by the Central Peace Committee.

The concert is at the centre of a matrix of forces that make it a unique event. Staged by and for the Peace Movement that sprang into existence in January when the warring political ghettos of West Kingston spontaneously made peace, the concert is also being held to commemorate the 12th anniversary of the visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to Jamaica, a portentous event to the island's many Rastafarians. Indeed, the whole concert and the Peace Movement itself is planted firmly under the red, green and gold colours of Rastafari, a force that for most of Jamaica's "youth" holds far more sway than any political doctrine or affiliation.

Further, the concert is to be attended by the leaders of Jamaica's two political parties – Prime Minister Michael Manley of the ruling People's National Party and Edward Seaga of the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) on whose behalf, if not authority, the ghetto gunmen had been terrorising each other's territory for the last five years or more.

Of significance, too, the concert marks the first return of Marley to the island since an assassination attempt in December '76 – shortly before he was to play in a Peace Concert which, though repeatedly declared apolitical, was widely interpreted as a boost to Michael Manley in the run-up to the '76 general election, a campaign fought in a blaze of ghetto gunplay.

For all these reasons, the concert and Jamaica itself are at present under the scrutiny of the world's press; one reason why you can be sure that the police are on their best behaviour, although

Jamaica's reputation for trouble hadn't been helped by a serious riot downtown a few days previously, when protests about living conditions had escalated into riots, looting, and damage of property with three looters shot dead by security forces.

AROUND 160 journalists and cameramen are in town for the concert, a third of them imported wholesale by Island Records who are anxious, no doubt, to put Marley back in the American press arena after a cancelled US tour last year and the consequent failure of *Exodus* to repeat its UK chart steamrolling in the States.

Once Island Records' offices, and until the shooting Marley's home, 56 Hope Road is now HQ for the Peace Committee and the operational hub of the concert, and is now virtually under siege by the press. Journalists mill around bewilderedly in the bright hot dusty yard alongside the vendors of Sky Juice and Irish Moss (JA drinks), peace movement workers, brethren and cool street brothers just come to pose and look on. An American who asks if she can photograph Marley against the bullet-holed wall in the back room is stared into shamefaced ignominy. The atmosphere is expectant.

From the veranda Peter Tosh regards the departure of the police with folded arms before striding across to his green acrylic Hillman Avenger, a purposeful looking pair of blackjacks stuffed into the back pocket of his jeans. Like a stepping razor... he's dangerous.

Later, too, Bunny Wailer shows up, stepping from his Land Rover in a lime green track suit, a machete strapped to his side. Not that anyone is expecting trouble.

Certainly not with the presence on the premises of Claudie Massop and Bucky Marshall, the principal characters in the truce of January '78. Political hitmen in the style of the wild west's hired gun, Massop toted iron for JLP, Marshall for the PNP. It was only when these two men, in a scene from a

BOB MARLEY IS BY NATURE THE OPPOSITE OF A SPOKESMAN

bizarre Western, shook hands that the shooting and murder in the ghettos could stop.

Meeting Bucky Marshall, I felt like the dumb Easterner who steps down from the stagecoach and walks into the saloon to be confronted by the cobra-eyed fastest gun in town. A discreet razor slash down one side of the face, white scars on the knuckles, a thin loop of cotton on the forefinger, Bucky puts the dread stare on white visitors and the weak heart drops. When, like a dumb tourist, I ask him to sign my concert poster, he scrawls a tight autograph straight across the name of Haile Selassie... just to let you know who he thinks is in control.

"There won't be any trouble about this concert," Don Taylor, Marley's manager, had said earlier, "because of the people behind it. I know those people who are hanging around Hope Road at the moment, Claudie and Bucky and them, I went to school with them, and they're the cause of the trouble there's been in the past, so if they say no trouble, there won't be any. Anyone trying anything would just... disappear.

"When I think of where we were at this point the last time we played a Peace Concert," adds Taylor ruefully in a reference to the ballistic events of December '76, "Me in hospital, Bob and them all bandaged up... and we still did the show."

TIMES SINCE then have not been easy for Bob Marley. In virtual exile in Miami and London – where he recorded *Exodus*, most or not all of *Kaya* and managed to get busted while not 'officially' in the country – he also had to have a tumour on his left big toe removed by amputation, an operation which forced the cancellation of a 1977 American tour.

For a man who believes that his work is divinely inspired and that "everything Jah do is well done", it must have been doubly hard to come to terms with such events. Indeed, Marley did not apparently believe an early diagnosis of his toe problem.

"You must have done something wrong," was evidently Marley's self-verdict as expressed on "Running Away" on *Kaya*, a doubt-ridden and contradictory album that despite flashes of animation roams too often into predictable MOR territory for comfort. Musical deterioration aside, the rumour mill has been only too willing to suggest just what Marley has done wrong and just who was responsible for the shooting that dark December night at Hope Road, though Marley himself has kept silent on both counts.

Undoubtedly the pressures of being simultaneously an international star and official spokesman for his faith and country have at times been severe, especially since Marley is by nature the opposite of a spokesman – more a freewheeling soul rebel as I would say. The toll is there to see; when I first met Marley he was 29 and looked five years younger; today he seems all his 33 years.

All the same, this early Friday morning as he sits on the back steps of Hope Road to hold a press conference, flanked by Claudie Massop and Massop's aide-de-camp Earl Wadley, he looks relaxed and happy. Admirers and bredren close around the trio with a mere clutch of journalists present; most of them are still chomping on their bacon butties in an attempt to drive out the excesses of last night's round of the rum bars.

The atmosphere is heady, excitable, and optimistic. Everyone wants a word and usually takes it – until the event is more like a theology class than a press conference.

Massop and Wadley explain how the Peace Movement stands outside the Jamaican political system, and that, in the words of Claudie, "We really not interested in any political faction. We need help from every section of this society, providing you're helping us fairly, without influence – no-one dictate to us because this is a poor man thing, a black man thing, and we spend our money our way."

"We stand for any side that's beneficial to the people," amplifies Wadley, "with no division ➤

Live at the One Love
Peace Concert at
the National Stadium,
Kingston, April 22, 1978



among the masses. The Peace Council is not fighting down any government that sits in Jamaica, but if they're willing to co-operate for the need of the people, we're willing to co-operate with them."

"It's a good heart this thing come from," says Bob. "A good heart. It couldn't come out o' politics."

"Everyone try to get peace," continues Wadley. "The government people a try it, the churches try it, but we, the people in the street, through the inspiration of Rastafari, we a do it."

No-one will entertain the notion of any trouble the next day – so the security forces won't be needed, suggests someone.

"Yeah, dem needed," replies Bob, "because they're part of Jamaica, too, part of the people, part of the whole thing man a deal with."

It is good, he continues, that the world will be watching, since "them gonna follow the example we set. When we come together the whole world gonna look and seh 'It can be done.'"

So why does Marley think Jamaica is in the position of leading the way?

"Because only Rasta know himself and know God. Every country must follow our example because... this is it." He laughs and stretches his hands to take in the assembly and, by implication, the whole island. "The waters are calm, that's why everyone is here like this."

"A bloodclaat war a go on elsewhere," he adds later. "Big war. Watch what a go on in Sout' Africa and Rhodesia. Bloodclaat war go on in the jungle. Jamaica nice, man..."

Would you do a concert in South Africa then, Bob?

"For the black people? Against Ian Smith? Yes man, tomorrow if dem want me. Would you go?"

Of course. Well, I'd try.

"Den try to arrange it for me 'cos me ready to go."

The Wailers will in fact be touring Africa this year together with Britain and the States, all the tours being, according to Marley, "Toward the Peace. Me carry The Peacet'rough the earth and everything we do again is toward the unification of black people. Togetherness, seen? Not an individual thing no more. That mean if it work or if it don't work, God know and decide."

MARLEY'S insistence that Jamaica is "setting the world an example" – and one hears the same sentiment from many mouths – may seem strange in light of the oft-projected picture of JA's imminent social and economic collapse.

It's true that the country is beset with problems of the most basic sort; 60 per cent unemployment, widespread and often chronic poverty and malnutrition, and persistent shortages of just about everything. With Michael Manley edging the country determinedly to the left, and the IMF and other more sinister forces breathing down his neck, it's a nation poised uncomfortably between capitalism and socialism, a colonial past and an unknown future. Yet for all the poverty and problems, only the blindly insensitive could fail to be impressed by the vibrant humanity of Jamaica's people, the country's physical beauty and the almost tangible air of mystery that hangs over the Caribbean "isle of springs".

There is an almost perverse optimism at work here, most notably among the Rastas – and with the vast majority of Jamaicans under 30, Rasta is easily the most dominant cultural force on the

island. Rightly or wrongly, the Rastas do feel that whatever the slings and arrows that Babylon may hurl at them, now is their ordained time. The success of the Peace Movement is almost universally attributed to the power of Rasta in Jamaica, the healing salve on an open wound.

Michael Manley himself has always courted the Rasta vote with care, visiting Selassie in the '60s and returning with a "rod of correction" bestowed upon him by the Emperor, which he subsequently used in his '72 election campaign.

The Jamaican middle and upper class (what's left of them – many have taken Manley's advice and caught the jet to the States), who hate and fear Manley and his egalitarian notions, may treat Rasta and its "vulgar" insistence on the sanctity of ganja smoking as an embarrassment, but the fact remains that right now Rasta and reggae are the prime forces jostling for international attention on Jamaica, as the One Love concert so readily bears witness.

The western world is only beginning to listen to the message of the Rastaman, and though the divinity of Selassie is central to Rasta beliefs, one doesn't need to share that belief to perceive and feel the power, nobility, and spirituality of the Rastaman and his music.

Walking into the massive National Stadium for the concert soundcheck on Friday afternoon, it was possible to see the twin strands of nationalism and the Rastafarianism entwining. The bold banners studded around the perimeter rim urging the nation "Work Together For Self Reliance" and "Forward With The People's Constitution", and the lithe young black Athenians engaged in athletics training, would have made it a scene straight from the Cuban textbook of national pride were it not for the huge stage and colossal bank of speakers in the centre of the track, together with the red, green and gold backdrop (designed by Neville Garrick) depicting what looked like an Afro-Caribbean Stonehenge.

A cluster of young site workers, some of them dreads, spent their ganja break checking us out, talking, curious, hospitable. In the late afternoon light, as each band ran through their paces, it all added up to an impressive advertisement for the New Jamaica, a near Utopian vision of a truly brave new world.

BY CONTRAST the afternoon of the concert was overcast, muggy, almost stifling inside the concrete bowl. The gathering clouds hardly seemed a good omen for the coming concert, but the moment that the waiting ceased and the concert began fears began to melt away.

The VIPs and press got the prime spot in front of the stage. Behind them the 'Peace' section sat, for

\$10 (£4) a head. \$5 bought you a pass to the 'Love' section, while to be in the 'togetherness' seats was \$2. Altogether 28,000 people attended.

The Peace Movement aside, if the only reason for the concert had been to display the depth of Jamaica's musical talent to the world, it would still have been magnificent. Suffice to say at the start that everyone played and sang brilliantly, and while the concert's eight or nine hour duration proved somewhat wearing – would any British rock audience have endured the same with so few amenities and such limited movement? I doubt it

– the organisation under the unflappable guidance of Tommy and Valerie Cowan was excellent.

The early part of the show was in some ways the most



enjoyable as Lloyd Parkes and We The People, including a beautifully crisp four-piece horn section, provided immaculate backing for a host of ranking acts that spanned the spectrum of JA music. With each act limited to two or three numbers, the effect was breathtaking. It was like watching a goodly proportion of my singles collection come alive before my eyes.

The Meditations were first on, a high stepping archetypal cool JA vocal trio out of the old Curtis/ Impressions tradition who offered lively versions of their hits “Live It Up” and “Woman Is Like A Shadow” to good reception. Then came Althea & Donna with a perfunctory performance of their pop song “Uptown Top Ranking”. They seemed what they are; plain, likeable girls who unexpectedly found themselves with a hit. Pass.

By contrast, Dillinger was immediate, electric and lewdly infectious. He strutted onstage in his faintly hideous red, green and gold striped pyjama suit like a strolling Elizabethan player, cut the

band, restarted at his own pace, and delivered a brace of dynamite talk-overs including “The War Is Over” (“*Son don’t take your guns to town/Cos the war is over*”) to great reception. Natural sunshine, he won the afternoon’s only encore, supplying “Eastman Skank” as his bonus.

The Mighty Diamonds’ somewhat pedestrian

**“ONLY RASTA
KNOW HIMSELF.
EVERY COUNTRY
MUST FOLLOW
OUR EXAMPLE”**

stage presence has never matched the promise of their early records and the addition of several stones’ weight between them has changed them little since their ’76 UK tour. They sang beautifully though; Marley’s “Keep On Moving” and, again betraying the Mayfield influence, “I Need A Roof”.

Next came the bizarre 10-year-old Junior Tucker, a Michael Jackson soundalike whose moves and dancing were precocious beyond belief. His youth and energy were not to be thwarted, however, and he took the audience by storm. Good clean family entertainment. Lew Grade should fly in and sign him quick, he has a hell of a voice.

Culture were a revelation. Another vocal trio, the group have won the accolades of UK critics and punters alike with their “Two Sevens Clash” album and a series of stand-out singles. They’ve also copped two Jamaican music awards in their 18-month existence. Their stage show unexpectedly complemented the high seriousness of their material by being totally zany and off the wall. ➤

The One Love Peace
Concert, 1978





Clad in canary yellow, the stringy figure of lead voice Joseph Hill bounded, leapt and windmilled round the stage while his companions wove mesmeric mischievous dances behind him. They rendered stirring versions of “Natty Never Get Weary”, “Natty Taking Over”, and “Stop The Fighting”, their peace disc, for which they were rewarded by one attendant British rock critic describing them as “singing Jehovah’s Witnesses”. You no see it! Dennis Brown, on the other hand, is out of the old school, his immaculately tailored suit and voice in direct lineage from the likes of Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye. His silky romantic tones were admirably displayed on a selection of his hits including “Funny Feeling” and his current blinder “How Can I Leave You”, though his set was over-extended and suffered as a result.

Trinity has no such claims to class. He’s a raw, rootsy talk-over artist, currently reggae’s most prolific and popular DJ, who surprised me by

looking like a slimline Bo Diddley without the guitar (but with specs). He performed “Peace Conference In A Western Kingston”, hid behind speakers, did a couple of rabbit sprints across stage, and was enormously well-received.

That left it to Leroy Smart to perform a solitary (shame) but fine “Ballistic Affair”, his ’76 classic, before first stand-up comedian Prince Edward (no fun) and then stand-up conga player Bongo Herman (great green lurex suit, otherwise naff) covered while the road crews moved in to hump amps and trail wires and such like stuff.

AROUND THIS TIME, Michael Manley arrived, just in time to witness Jacob Miller and Inner Circle contribute a set that made up in comic zest what it lacked in subtlety. “Killer” Miller has a substantial list of JA hits under his belt, but his and Inner Circle’s efforts to crack the US rock market via Capitol Records have been a dismal failure – largely because

they’ve mistakenly substituted diluted reggae for their natural bluster and attack.

The band – including the formidably proportioned Lewis brothers on bass and guitar and the redoubtable Touter Harvey on keyboards – played a sizzling set while the battle-fatigued Miller paraded his belly lasciviously up and down the stage, shone with sweat, sang “Shakey Girl”, “Tired Fe Lick Weed In A Bush” and “Tenement Yard” among others.

During his treatment of “Peace Treaty Is Coming Home” – possibly the worst peace record of the coming batch – he also leapt from the stage, seized a police helmet and paraded in front of Manley smoking a spliff to wild applause, and brought on a swaying, arm-in-arm gaggle of Claudie Massop, Bucky Marshall, Earl Wadley and Trevor Phillips, which for many of the ghetto inhabitants in the two-dollar seats was surely more significant than the Manley/Seaga ritual handshake at the climax of the show.

Strained relations:
Marley with Edward
Seaga at the One Love
Peace Concert, 1978



Big Youth's approach was largely the polar opposite to Miller's. No stunts, no leaping and cavorting, just pure majestic presence, the faithful rendition of a handful of his many hits before an admirably poised band, and that Technicolor grin, wide as Kingston harbour. Oh, and the moment in "House Of Dreadlocks" when he whips off his tam and whirls round his locks like a cat o' nine tails. What can you do more than love it?

The repertoire was much the same as last year's UK tour – "Every Nigger Is A Star", "Hit The Road Jack", "House Of Dreadlocks", plus "Isaiah First Prophet Of Old" – though Youth told me later (while serving in his record shop!) that the Rainbow show was superior. Most of the press enclosure found him dull, but as one young dread put it afterwards, "The man grace move me." I concur.

Marley may have been topping the bill, but there was no doubt that it was Peter Tosh who stole the show with a combination of militant rhetoric and a dazzling display from his band. Refusing even to

take the stage until a clear gangway had been made for him, Tosh strode on like a black James Coburn, attired in black kung fu suit and beret, and slammed into the old Wailers' song "400 Years". For me it was less Tosh who stole the show than the superlative Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar on bass and drums, who must surely now be acknowledged as the foremost rhythm section in the world. The tracksuit-clad Shakespeare was magnificent, stomping the stage incessantly, locks like rams' horns, toting his Hofner McCartney bass like a Thompson machine gun in Wilkoesque moves, and supplying an endlessly inventive sequence of runs that together with Dunbar's flying rimshots lifted Tosh's material into another dimension.

Tosh himself was clearly not going to waste the opportunity to practise his eloquence on such a large audience, especially when it included the Prime Minister. Having run through throbbing versions of "Stepping Razor" and "Burial", he disclaimed himself from The Peace itself. "I man no want no peace, I man want equal rights and justice," he bellowed, before playing "Equal Rights". This, though, was as nothing compared to the personal harangue he delivered to Manley on Jamaica's ganja laws. After bitterly denouncing Jamaica's colonial past and the activities of slave trading pirates like Henry Morgan and Sir Francis Drake, he went on to demand an answer to why the country was still living under the shadow of their mentality. And he warned against the present-day pirates "with their ickle camera round their neck".

Further, he asked, why were JA's prisons always full only with poor people? "The police brutalise poor people fe an ickle draw of herb," he denounced righteously to a great boom of applause. "I am one of the disposed and we been kept down TOO BLOODCLAAAT LONG!" More applause. Moreover, he considered the answer to Jamaica's unemployment problem was to give over the many idle acres of land to the poor to cultivate herb for export purposes. The discourse was long and intense – no idle talk. Serious t'ing! Tosh meant business, having himself been hospitalised after a police bust. To round it all off he played "Legalise It" and "Get Up, Stand Up" (which he wrote with Marley) and brought the concert to its real climax.

Some people thought Tosh was trying to start a riot, but the Kingston crowd know him from way

slowly stately Rasta drumming and chanting, further ritualised by the appearance of a girl dance troupe whose graceful pirouettes beneath the high silver full moon gave the whole scenario an almost dreamlike quality straight from Tennyson's "Lotus-Eaters". It was a regal, devotional set, undoubtedly for Ras Mike a serious and holy performance.

By the time Marley and The Wailers took the stage it was well past midnight and people had already started to leave. Marley maintained the devotional mood with a brace of Rasta anthems, sounding like he'd scraped away half his vocal chords that night on chalice smoke. He wore an odd garment of brown, gold and green, with a profile of Africa on the back, South Africa and Rhodesia marked conspicuously in red. Working the mic without a guitar and supplementing his customary knees-up dances with a curious, swift inward flick of his left foot – legacy, no doubt, of his operation – he ran through "Natural Mystic", "Trenchtown Rock", "Natty Dread", "Rastaman Vibration", "Jamming", "Jah Live" (his best number that night) and "War". The Wailers, augmented by two extra guitarists, three Rasta drummers and a four-piece horn section, played well, but no-one seemed to be able to shake off the slightly strained atmosphere that had inevitably accumulated around Marley's appearance on the stage.

Marley himself seemed to be trying desperately hard, his brow furrowed, eyes closed, his performance punctuated with wild shamanistic leaps into the air. He knew much was expected of him. When he finally brought on Seaga – who looked disarmingly like a vacuum cleaner salesman – and Manley during the old Wailers number "One Love", and clasped their hands above his head to seal the bi-lateral peace, the strain was clearly showing.

Though the action was evidently a pre-rehearsed ritual, it was still an astonishing moment, clearly inconceivable in any Western country if not any other country in the world but Jamaica.

Its real significance? Certainly a great deal less than the moment over three months earlier when the street representatives of these two politicians, names of Bucky Marshall and Claudie Massop, likewise clasped hands on Beeston Street – the concert was rather like collecting your certificate when the real struggle was swimming the length of the goddamn pool.

Manley is undoubtedly delighted with the peace; after all, he has been unable to secure an end to the violence in the ghettos with his draconian security forces – now the people themselves had supplied the solution. Seaga may or may not be so delighted with the quiet; after all, there's little political kudos in it for him, while Manley at least can feel and claim that the mandate for his Jamaican socialism has received yet another endorsement.

Whatever, Manley's programme for Jamaica can clearly not proceed without taking account of the still waving force of Rastafari. Sooner or later, he will have to play his trump card with the Rastas and legalise ganja, which is after all to the average Jamaican what Guinness is to the average Irishman. With the economic situation showing few signs of improvement, and Holland already setting a lead by applying to withdraw from the international treaty outlawing the herb, that time may come sooner than many people expect or want. 🗣️

"THE POLICE BRUTALISE POOR PEOPLE FE AN ICKLE DRAW OF HERB" BOB MARLEY

back. "I me ever so," said one onlooker. "Dot just Peter Tosh being Peter Tosh. Never different."

Ras Michael and The Sons Of Negus have militant songs, too, but left them aside in favour of a set of

SURVIVAL

RELEASED 2 OCTOBER 1979

"We're the survivors!" A pilgrimage to Africa inspires a full-blooded return to radicalism.

BY JASON ANDERSON

BY 1979, Bob Marley had become one of the rare musical artists who could be fairly described as having a genuinely global audience. Since their first performances outside Jamaica in 1971, the Wailers had played to rapturous crowds in venues across North America and Europe, venturing all the way to Australia and Japan.

Yet the question of exactly who Marley was singing to and for had become more complex than the mainly white audiences in many of these regions may have acknowledged at the time or, indeed, recognise now. An artist keenly aware of his circumstances even as he shifted out of poverty and adopted the trappings of wealth, Marley used his music as a means of responding to – and sometimes influencing – an array of social, historical and political forces. However, the specific context of so much of Marley's work was conveniently overlooked by fans in ganja-leaf T-shirts who believed that singing along to "Jammin'" was enough to make them some kind of sufferah.

Given that reality, it's hard not to interpret the lyrics in the title track of Marley's ninth album for Island as a riposte to listeners who believed he somehow existed at a remove from the matters of race, class and power that fostered inequity and injustice in the world. "We're the survivors," he sings, his voice at the forefront of a

fervent chorus of male and female voices. "Yes, *the black survival*." Marley had originally intended the phrase for the album's title but shortened it to prevent any misinterpretations of the album's wider themes. That's one of the few concessions or compromises to be found on what is Marley's most brazenly political LP.

His songwriting on *Survival* is dominated by statements of defiance and calls for action. Expressions of that fervour range from the title track's assertion that the time for "*preaching and talking is done*", to "Zimbabwe"'s blunt claim that "*We gonna fight*," to "Babylon System"'s rallying cry of "*We refuse to be what you wanted us to be*," to his funky exhortation to listeners to "*Wake up and live*" in the album's final track. At many points in the proceedings, he offers a vivid preview of the apocalypse that's coming down the line for Babylon. Though the musical settings may sometimes be engaging and even gentle in spirit – did the I Three ever sound so sweet as they do on "Zimbabwe"? – there's no time for idling by or for the singing of love songs of the kind that would fill *Legend*.

Marley had originally intended *Survival* to be the first in a trilogy that would chart the struggles leading up to the last confrontation with the forces of Babylon, hence the title of the album he'd leave incomplete when he died two years later. Though *Survival*'s brand of militancy is milder than Peter Tosh's fiercer demonstrations on *Equal Rights*, its contents still ➤

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS



BEHIND THE LETTERS
OF THE TITLE IS THE
HORRIFIC IMAGE OF
THE STOWAGE
COMPARTMENT
OF A SLAVE SHIP

mark a dramatic turn away from *Kaya* and its sunnier, more avidly commercial songs about herb, love and sex. The cover by Neville Garrick presents the flags of 48 African nations, many of them newly independent and still struggling to get free of the shackles of colonialism. (The 49th is for Papua New Guinea. Still under apartheid, South Africa is a conspicuous omission – the government promptly banned the album.)

Behind the letters of the title in white upper-case type is the horrific image of the stowage compartment of *Brookes*, an 18th-century Liverpool slave ship. “The branded slaves were packed like so many non-human commodities,” reads the caption for another appearance of the image in the inner sleeve. The combination of these images was nothing if not provocative, Garrick’s design linking the drive for independence among African nations through the 1960s and ’70s with the legacy of the slave trade in the Caribbean, Jamaica’s British colonial masters having transported hundreds of thousands of slaves to the island.

All this served to reflect the very urgent and very painful process of decolonisation that Frantz Fanon had anticipated in *The Wretched Of The Earth*. The 1961 book by the Afro-Caribbean philosopher and theorist – who, in an eerie parallel with Marley, also died of cancer at the age of 36 – provided a rhetorical framework for so many of the era’s conflicts. It also emphasised how the “white man’s values” had been internalised by oppressed peoples, thereby making their psychological liberation harder to achieve than any political aims.

Of course, Marley responded most directly to his circumstances in Jamaica. Like many former colonies, the country was debilitated by its swerves between political parties at opposite ends of the spectrum, with Michael Manley’s leftist PNP locked in a bitter, often bloody struggle with Edward Seaga’s right-wing JLP. Jamaica had been isolated by America due to the Manley government’s Marxist, anti-colonial leanings and close ties to Castro’s Cuba, and its economy was a shambles. Electrical outages were common and bread trucks attracted long lineups of hungry people. Marley’s performance at the One Love Peace Concert in 1978 did little to stem the political violence or rising number of murders leading up to Seaga’s election in 1980.

Nor is there any evidence of the quasi-messianic properties that many had attributed to Marley over the previous decade in the wary, almost despairing mood of *Survival*’s magnificent opening track. As he laments in “So Much Trouble In The World”, “*So you think you have found*



CRITICS' VERDICT

“Marley has learnt his lessons well; win hearts first, sway minds later. Only further exposure reveals the sorrows and anger of Marley the militant. I doubt if I’ll hear a more provocative album of popular music for a long time to come.”
CHRIS BOHN, MELODY MAKER, SEPTEMBER 29, 1979

“Marley’s angriest, most powerful and resonant album in years... for cohesion and consistency of mood perhaps surpasses even *Catch A Fire* and *Natty Dread*.”
NEIL SPENCER, NME, SEPTEMBER 29, 1979

the solution/But it’s just another illusion,” Rastafari being the only truth in a world full of falseness. There’s a more buoyant quality to the I Three’s voices on the chorus and to the sultry groove provided by the Barrett brothers. In fact, Chris Blackwell cites it as one of his favourite Marley tracks, which is

particularly noteworthy since he had less to do with *Survival*’s creation than with any other of Marley’s albums for Island. Alex Sadkin served as Blackwell’s proxy in the studio at Tuff Gong in Kingston and during the mixes at Criteria Studios in Miami. (Sadkin would become the head engineer at Compass Point before dying in a car crash in Nassau in 1987, shortly before he was set to work with Ziggy Marley.)

The album’s core theme of pan-African unity comes to the fore in “Zimbabwe”, which he first performed live at the Amandla Festival in Boston a few months before *Survival*’s release and would present before a crowd of ecstatic Africans the following April during the new country’s Independence festivities. The song was actually one of several Marley had written during his trip to Ethiopia in late 1978. His trip to the holy land of Rastafarianism moved the singer deeply, resulting in the revolutionary spirit of both “Zimbabwe” and “Africa Unite”. Since “Zimbabwe” was written before the successful achievement of independence for the former Rhodesia, Marley claimed there was an element of divine prophecy to it. Again, the heavy subject matter is lightened by the Wailers’ supple performance and a Sadkin mix that deftly accentuates even the subtlest element of the percussion arrangement.

In “Top Rankin’” – a term used for the “dons” in control of Jamaica’s urban fiefdoms but one that Marley slyly applies to Manley and Seaga, too – the singer admonishes his brethren for allowing squabbles to keep them divided. As he sings, “*All they want us to do is/Keep on*



killing one another.” There are echoes here of Fanon’s dire warnings about post-colonial acrimony and division, as new violence reinforces old structures and the possibility of true change recedes. Rastafari again serves as the only way out of the morass in “Babylon System”, one of Marley’s most extreme visions of the evils of the unenlightened world and of a Jah-less power structure, a “*vampire sucking the blood of the sufferers*”. As he sings over a gospel-style arrangement for the I Three, “*Tell the children the truth right now.*”

Together with “Survival”, “Babylon System” serves as the album’s hard, dense core, the Wailers’ music feeling unusually heavy and foreboding and therefore very

TRACKMARKS SURVIVAL

- 1 So Much Trouble In The World ★★★★★
- 2 Zimbabwe ★★★★★
- 3 Top Rankin’ ★★★★★
- 4 Babylon System ★★★★★
- 5 Survival ★★★★★
- 6 Africa Unite ★★★
- 7 One Drop ★★★
- 8 Ride Natty Ride ★★★★★
- 9 Ambush In The Night ★★★
- 10 Wake Up And Live ★★★★★

Label: Tuff Gong/Island
Produced by: Bob Marley & The Wailers, Alex Sadkin
Recorded at: Tuff Gong Studio, Kingston
Personnel: Bob Marley (lead vocal, rhythm and acoustic guitar, percussion), Aston ‘Family Man’ Barrett (Fender bass, rhythm guitar, keyboards, percussion), Carlton Barrett (drums, percussion), Tyrone Downie (keyboards,

percussion, backing vocals), Junior Marvin (lead guitar, backing vocals), Earl ‘Wya’ Lindo (keyboards, percussion, backing vocals), Al Anderson (lead guitar), Rita Marley (backing vocals), Judy Mowatt (backing vocals), Marcia Griffiths (backing vocals), Carlton ‘Santa’ Davis (drums on “Africa Unite”), Mikey ‘Boo’ Richards (drums on “Wake Up And Live”), Val Douglas (bass

on “Wake Up And Live”), Dean Fraser (tenor and alto saxophone), Headley Bennett (alto saxophone), Ronald “Nambo” Robinson (trombone), Melba Liston (trombone), Luther Francois (trombone), Junior “Chico” Chin (trumpet), Jackie Willacy (trumpet), Micky Hanson (trumpet), Lee Jaffe (harmonica)
Highest chart position: US 70, UK 32



Signing autographs in Tower Records, Hollywood, CA, 1979

different from the more spacious, dub-influenced sounds that prevailed on *Kaya*. (Marley tended to reserve his brighter melodies either for his love songs or expressions of yearning, like the following year's "Redemption Song".) It's always been hard to determine just how aware Marley and Fela Kuti really were of each other's music during their respective imperial phases but, with its punchy horns and subdued tension, "Survival" definitely shares a certain toughness with the Afrofunk sound pioneered by the continent's self-professed Black President.

Despite the title, "Africa Unite" offers a smoother, more identifiably Caribbean variety of groove. Here, the mood becomes more hopeful as all good people discover "how pleasant it would be" to witness "the unification of all Rastaman". There's yet more jubilation in "One Drop" as Marley implores listeners to feel the "rhythm resisting against the system" and trust in the path of the righteous – "I know Jah would never let us down," he offers.

Survival's sprightliest song – even more so on the 12-inch mix appended to the 2001 CD remaster – "Ride Natty Ride" celebrates the resilience and determination of the Rastaman despite the efforts of the deceivers who want "to force on us the devil's illusion". Perhaps there's a note of Marley's ambivalence about his own growing wealth in his admonishments of the wicked as they witness the fires "burning down everything" and "melting their gold".

A DRAMATIC TURN AWAY FROM KAYA AND ITS SUNNIER, COMMERCIAL SONGS

The idea that the wicked are about to get what's coming to them is even more forceful in "Ambush In The Night", a song that's been scrutinised as Marley's musical response to the attack on 56 Hope Road in December '76. He certainly lays out the event in stark terms: "Ambush in the night/ All guns aiming at me/ Ambush in the night/ They opened fire on me." But he also roots his experience within a wider context, lamenting the conditions that foster so much violence in Jamaica and lambasting the power-hungry men who set the "ignorant" against each other by bribing them with "guns, spare parts and money".

While the world Marley depicts in *Survival* is filled with danger, despair and deception, it's always one whose hardships can be transcended – as he sings in "Wake Up And Live", "Rise, ye mighty people/ There is work to be done." And if he was looking for a way to inspire listeners to keep on keepin' on with the struggles depicted in the preceding songs, Marley landed on a

sure-fire strategy by concluding *Survival* with one of the funkier songs the Wailers ever recorded. Marley's ardent love of James Brown is plain to hear in his ecstatic grunts and seemingly offhanded direction to his players to "break it down" – "How is it feeling over dere?" he exclaims as Dean Fraser finishes up a sublime saxophone solo.

Fittingly, when it came time to head back to America to support the release of *Survival*, Marley insisted that the tour begin at the Apollo in Harlem. The first reggae band to play Brown's legendary stomping ground, the Wailers performed a four-night stand that did much to bolster Marley's standing with African-American audiences even if black radio stations remained far less supportive of his music. The group used three backdrops for the Apollo shows. The first featured the Ethiopian flag, the second was of Haile Selassie I and the third combined images of the Rastafarian leader with Marcus Garvey and guerrilla fighters. Like the flags and slave-ship diagram on *Survival*'s cover, these images were potent signifiers for any who sought a deeper understanding of the words Marley chose so carefully. Others may have preferred to keep their eyes on the singer, lest their minds become troubled by thoughts of their own positions within those dialectical relations between the righteous and the wicked, between former slaves and former masters, and between whoever constitutes *Survival*'s notions of "us" and "them".

Live at the Apollo
Theater, Harlem,
October 1979



"People receptive to this thing o' mine"

NME joins Bob Marley in New York as he plays a residency at the Apollo Theater, Harlem. It's a venue resonant in Black American culture, and a good vantage point from which to survey Marley's achievements so far. After the shows, Bob muses on the place of Rastafari in the world, touching along the way on topics as varied as Bob Dylan, apartheid, and 2 Tone. "Until the black man united," he tells **NEIL SPENCER**, "then the whole world is in trouble."



NME
10/11/1979

**“DIDN’T my people before me
slave for this country?” – Bob
Marley, “Crazy Baldheads”**

THE ELECTRIC sign on the pedestrian crossing on Sixth Avenue and 56th Street is flashing ‘Don’t Walk’ but Bob Marley keeps stepping anyway. Head back, legs pumping, arms swinging shoulder high, his slight frame moves with a determination and speed that startles even the hardened pavement pounders of busy midtown Manhattan.

Worse still for the surprised native New Yorkers, Marley’s trailing a whole gaggle of stepping dreads behind him, half a dozen of them laughing and lurching round the sidewalk real dangerously in their attempts to match pace with the leader without actually breaking into a run. Two blocks back Jacob Miller [musician; Marley associate] – for he is among this company – almost took out a woman and pushchair on a blind corner.

Upfront Marley, wearing a mischievous deadpan face, jeans, trucking boots, quilted jacket and enormous woolly hat, shows no signs of slackening the pace. He’s enjoying the confusion in his wake, his zen lesson. He’s on business here so just walks these 10 blocks or so from his hotel on Central Park to the rehearsal studio as quickly as possible, seen.

We hit the studios in about five minutes flat. Here The Wailers are to go through their paces in readiness for the seven shows they will play at Harlem’s celebrated Apollo Theater over the next four days. The buzz on the gigs is already around town and no sooner have we arrived than Marley’s giving his first TV interview of the tour, sitting on stage with his red Les Paul draped round his neck while guys the size of elevators shovel cameras and lights around and an elegant Black American lady shows Bob her teeth and asks questions like: “But tell me, where does your wonderful charisma come from?”

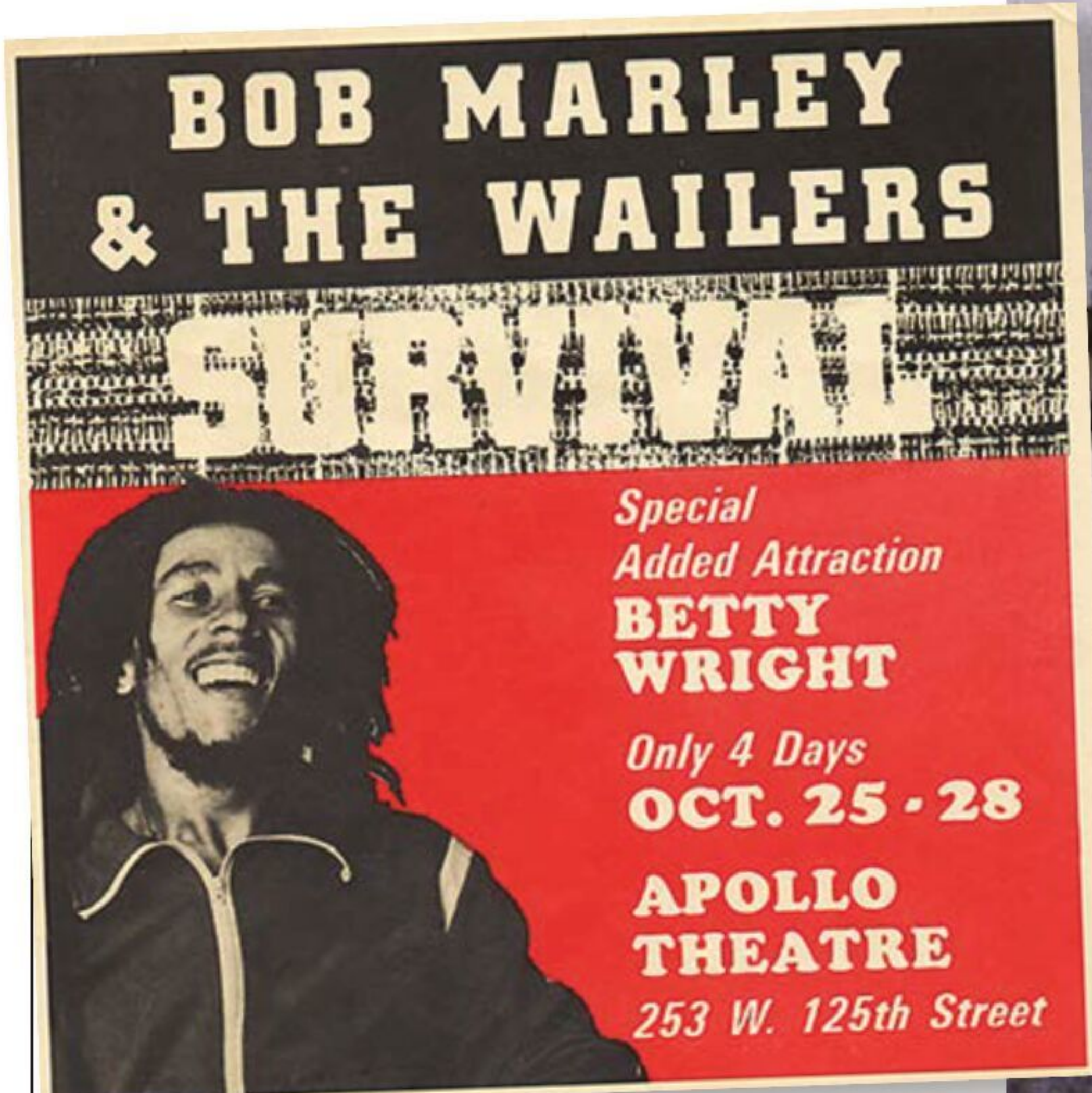
Bob looks away and laughs. “I’m serious,” persists the lady, flashing her best smile.

Bob looks at the floor and mutters a long unintelligible sentence ending in an abrupt. “RASTAFARI!” to the camera.

“Well you’re not making sense,” sighs the TV lady gracefully. “But tell me, why are you playing the Apollo? Is there any significance in that?”

“Well, Marcus [Garvey] was there,” begins Bob. An answer and a half later he’s calling over the dapper figure of Wailers drummer Carly Barrett and the lurking presence of Jacob Miller to help explain the way it is to the TV lady. The camera and lights all have to be shifted again for this new development while Bob sits there plucking absently on his guitar, looking amused.

“The Apollo is an important part of our black



heritage,” says one of the Wailers party later. “I can’t think of any major black international star who hasn’t played there at one point – Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, right from them people there to all the soul stars, everyone. That’s one reason Bob has to play there, to put him in that tradition for people to understand.”

The decision to play the Apollo is symbolic of the mood and intentions in the Wailers camp at present: to carry reggae and its message to the estranged soul of Black America. In tune with the hardline theme of black unity presented on *Survival*, on this particular round of North Amerikan and Kanadian Babylon by bus (and plane), the group will be aiming not so much at the white rock audience they garnered a few years ago around the time of *Rastaman Vibration*, but at the million or so American blacks who have so far shown themselves determinedly resistant to the impressive musical and cultural output of Jamaica.

Beyond a passing and often patronising dalliance with Marley and Peter Tosh and the more obvious aspects of their rebel style – in particular their upfront herbalism – the American rock audience has had little time for reggae anyway. It’s been treated by press and punters alike as an exotic cultural tidbit rather than lived with, examined, borrowed from and cross-pollinated in the way it has in Britain, with its substantial Jamaican population and long-standing cultural/political/piratical links with the West Indies. In the UK we have Michael Holding and Cyrille Regis, reggae regularly on the charts, The Cimarons and Sham 69 or Aswad and Clash on the same Rock Against Racism bill, obscure if brilliant Jamaican celebrities being granted full-page features in the music press...

“Because the theme of *Survival* is black unity I’ve been concentrating on black newspapers, radio stations and the rest because they’ve never covered Bob properly in the past,” I’m told by Bernice Sanders, another elegant American black lady who’s doing Marley’s public relations work on this trip. If the culture gap between Jamaica and white America, even hip white America, is vast, then the gulf between Jamaica and Black America, even hip black America, is even more intriguingly wide.

While reggae is firmly founded on the legacy and styles of Black American music, particularly ’60s R&B, and continues to borrow from it today, Black American music hasn’t felt much obliged to reverse the process (Taj Mahal aside).

More central still: it’s a long way from the sharp strutting, jive talkin’, coke sniffin’, git down

**“EVERYTHING
ROUND YOU IS
LIFE, STILL BUT YOU
DON’T REALLY SEE
ANYTHING”
BOB MARLEY**

Intimate
atmosphere:
live at the
Apollo,
October 1979



A quiet moment
at LaGuardia
airport, Queens,
New York, 1979

have other ideas but that's how it looks from behind the red gold and green battlements.

"Death to disco, mon. I am here to make reggae the international music, because disco doesn't have the spiritual potential of reggae. The devil created disco, telling black people to 'get down get down' all the time. But I man seh to black people, 'Get up stand up for your rights.'"

– Peter Tosh, talking to Oui magazine, US tour, September 1979

NEW YORK isn't America, just as London isn't Britain. New Yorkers are a tough, independent breed who seem to hold the rest of the country in slight scorn, as well they might considering the uniqueness, might, oppression and exhilaration of their city.

No, New York isn't America, which is why you'll hear more reggae on the radio there than anywhere else in the world, and that includes Kingston JA. "Hi, this is Bob Marley and *Survival* on WLIB the best of both worlds," comes the call jingle and "One Stop" is given another outing on the airwaves alongside an advert for the Apollo shows. Tune into Radio WLIB anytime between dawn and dusk and you'll hear the likes of Black Uhuru's "Shine Eye Gal" and Smile & Michigan's "Nice Up The Dance" played two to one alongside US sides by the likes of The Sugar Hill Gang. Other stations programme reggae shows like WHBI's Rockers 80 where Earl 'Rootsman' Chin plays heavy duty dub and rockers" from a

strictly rootsical perspective".

"The reason Black Americans have never picked up on reggae is because it's never been presented properly," Earl tells me. "Now they can hear it the right way. I have a phone-in show too and I know from that there's all sorts of people, all races, picking up on what I'm playing."

On the other end of the city's transistor sets is a mixed audience of interested white and black Americans, and a whole colony of Jamaicans living mostly out in Brooklyn and the Bronx. New York's expanding West Indian community – one of a score of ethnic groups that contribute to New York's decaying post-industrial new world ambience – is a phenomenon beginning to make everyone from the radio stations to the *New York Times* sit up and pay attention.

Already New York, or at least Brooklyn, has spawned homegrown reggae labels like Clocktower Records, homegrown bands like

paaarrtty world of popular Black American idealisation to the resolute Rastafarian idealism, roots talk and poverty of Kingston 12; a long leap from the cheerful profanity of Richard Pryor to the solemn chants of Big Youth. Or as numerous Americans will tell you: them soul dudes uptown don't wanna hear 'bout none o' that jive Jah music shit, y'dig?

Maybe things won't be this way always. With Black America in something of a cultural cul-de-sac, with the increasing determination of reggae music to become truly international (an attitude found at all levels and stations of the reggae industry/business/operation incidentally, from shop counter to record label to artist to sound system, London, Kingston, New York and Toronto), and with other similar manifestations of this iwah, an increasing dialogue between Black America and Jamaica seems inevitable.

Certainly it does to Bob Marley. "The more them

get it the more them get it," he tells me wryly.

"Some people never hear about it yet, but they're beginning to realise what it is... must catch on."

"I have a feeling that this tour will be the one to break us here," says Neville Garrick who designs Marley's LP sleeves and who is one of the two dozen or so who make up the Wailers touring party. Add instruments and suchlike paraphernalia and that's some circus to be hauling on a 47-date, seven-week tour of everywhere from Seattle to Texas.

For this latest onslaught on the States Marley's armed with his most impressive album in several years. *Survival* mirrors Marley's determination for and belief in black unity as a divinely willed imperative: "Black man kinda lose himself as the leader and until black man united then the world a run on same ways in wickedness."

For Marley and The Wailers, this latest tour is another chapter in a continuing holy crusade, another blast of cultural guerrilla warfare. You may

Shininglight:
Marley in
New York,
October 1979



New Breed or Manyaka who pretty much resemble their British counterparts give or take a soulful slickness and in one case a distinct soul brother accent intoning “*Ya gotta! check on Jah Jahya’ll, ya gotta get behind Jah*” from the stage. There are reggae shops, a reggae club circuit which means you can see Israel Vibration up from yard playing in Long Island, or a local group play downtown at The Ones midweek or at Max’s on a Sunday night, atmospheres which have more in common with Peckham and Soho than Harlem.

In any case the West Indies is surfacing in New York, and it’s not just Jamaica and reggae either; it’s Trinidad, Barbados and the rest, bringing with them calypso and jump up music that’s likewise featured on the airwaves and in the clubs. Linton Kwesi Johnson certainly seems to have stirred up interest here on his recent visit, coinciding as it did with the West Indian Carnival in Brooklyn which attracted around a million people.

After all, why emigrate to jobless uptight Britain when you can earn good money as an electrician up in Brooklyn? It’s not exactly cricket in Central Park yet, but that can’t be far away.

“What has to happen – bad as we hate to say it – is that you got to open up the farms again and put black people back to work with what they can work with – their hands. What else we gonna do? Be stupid and then walk round and tear up the town? The best thing for people is to work in a hard job, stay where the taxes low and not have much responsibility. Stay in the country and leave society alone,

take what we need in society to get out of it.”
– James Brown on ghetto problems, *Soho Weekly News*, June 1979

WALKING along Harlem’s 125th St to see Bob Marley at the Apollo on a weekend night is slightly less unnerving than walking along Finsbury Park’s Seven Sisters Road to see Culture at the Rainbow. Fewer policemen and dogs outside, fewer stickmen inside.

Contrary to popular European imagination, large areas of New York are safe to walk through day or night; Harlem, however, isn’t one of them. Drive (don’t walk) a block back from the brightly lit avenue of 125th and the pavement fires fuelled on old tyres are starting up, watched over by angry eyes in the night. Kids are breaking open cars to rifle and steal, unknown lunatics with guns and junk are going about their deadly business. God knows there’s enough sufferation and sophisticated poverty here to fire a more vital musical alchemy than “Paaarrtty”.

From epic and legendary works such as *James Brown Live At The Apollo (Pts 1 & 2)* and other such youthful impressions, I’d always imagined the Apollo as some cavernous and decorative hall, something of a colossus by Brit standards. In reality it’s an intimate, old-fashioned theatre which seats around 1,600 people and which recalls bygone English music halls. It’s even painted Great Western brown and cream and has usherettes. It’s easy to see the reason for its reputation; a hot soul band with full house must be able to cook up one hell of an atmosphere with the audience

gathered almost bowl-like around the stage.

In the foyer a vast collage of black stars from the past testify to the Apollo’s history. These days the old place is something of a shadow of its former self, and Marley’s decision to play there is seen as something of a boost to its sagging reputation.

The audience for the Wailers shows is a mixture of visiting whites, native Harlemites and West Indians, whose giant tams, towering caps, ites gold and green trimmings and overall dubwise style uncannily recall scenes at British reggae concerts. There’s no trouble, at least not until the second show of the last night when the number of people gathered outside the theatre clearly exceeds all hopes of them all actually fitting inside.

The Wailers’ show has shown dangerous signs of atrophy in the last couple of years; fresh material has been introduced but the basic lineup and format of the show has remained largely unchanged beyond the addition of Junior Marvin’s flashy guitar work with Marley’s volatile voice and stage presence soaring and plunging in front of a progressively richer wall of sound. On the way some of the band’s sinewy strength and pace have been lost – compare ’75’s triumphant *Live* set from the Lyceum to the clumsy *Babylon By Bus* live double of last year and the loss is all too apparent.

This time round the set is of a different composition – standards like “...Sheriff”, “Kinky Reggae” and “Concrete Jungle” alongside virtually all of *Survival* – and it makes for a fresher and certainly more militant set.

The greatest change is in the performance of Marley himself. No longer content to alternate

between impassive eyes-shut declamation and hectic knees-up skanking, he gives each number a considered, individual treatment, his gestures and moves matching the extreme care with which he articulates each line.

The audience roars along in traditional call-and-response style as Marley unfolds his lyrical wares on the likes of "Crazy Baldheads" and "Ambush In The Night", surely his best song in years, and if rock audiences have consistently shown that you don't have to be Rasta to be moved by the anguish, spirit and rebellion of Marley's music, then right now in the clamour of a mixed audience at the Apollo Harlem there seems less reason for American blacks not to be also riding high on his insight and anger.

TRIUMPHANT though the Apollo shows were – predictably triumphant – personally I'd reached higher heights the previous day watching Marley in

rehearsal. Perhaps for obvious reasons; over-familiarity with a stage show still coming fresh to many people, the intimacy of the rehearsal studio (a chance to see Marley sing with his eyes open yet!), most of all the freshness of seeing him perform unencumbered by several of the band, his songs standing simply – put it down to old-fashioned R&R and R&B tastes or new wave minimalism, whatever.

Like any other topline touring band, The Wailers are a mobile energy vortex drawing people to its centre and trailing them behind, and the studio is a constant set of comings and goings. Outside in the lobby Rita Marley and Judy Mowatt are perched with a portable tape the size of a large cornflake packet blasting out *Survival* as inside Marley and co settle down for a seven-hour-long stint. I corner the lady from the TV station as she's about to leave – was she happy with the interview she'd just copped with Bob?

"I'm delighted," she tells me. "I haven't heard substance like that since 1968 when I got into so-called black television. Who cares you can't understand him? When you got someone who's not conscious of the camera and of a philosophical nature, people pick up."

"Dem seh that this thing of ours is like the black power thing they had here 10 years ago," one of the studio idlers tells me later, "same way dem seh it's like the hippies and so on, but it not the same 'cos dis Rasta business."

The jocular, powerful figure of Jacob Miller – considerably slimmed down from the rolling excess of several months back – wanders over and

sits on the table in front of me. He gives me a long curious look. "Is a long time me wait to see the man personally," he says, twirling his spliff.

"I met Haile Selassie once, when I was on the road in Africa with Miriam Makeba. After the show we all stood in line and he shook my hand. He was a strange person, he liked to have lions chained outside his home, the palace in Addis Ababa. He was an odd colour, there was something strange about his skin. I think he was wearing makeup or something."
– Joe Stevens, NME photographer

THERE are times when Bob Marley's hotel room resembles a bus station ticket office – phones ringing, assorted people queuing up for information – who, what, when, where, how long, wh'appen – bredren, businessmen, mediamen and more.

This is, after all, top level music business, with the creative centre of it the diminutive figure with yard-long dreadlocks piled inside his tam, trying to carry out what he sees as his appointed work.

No-one who's that big in this business escapes the pressures, the sycophants, the scars (literal in Marley's case), but Marley manages better than most. He fields the phone calls expertly,

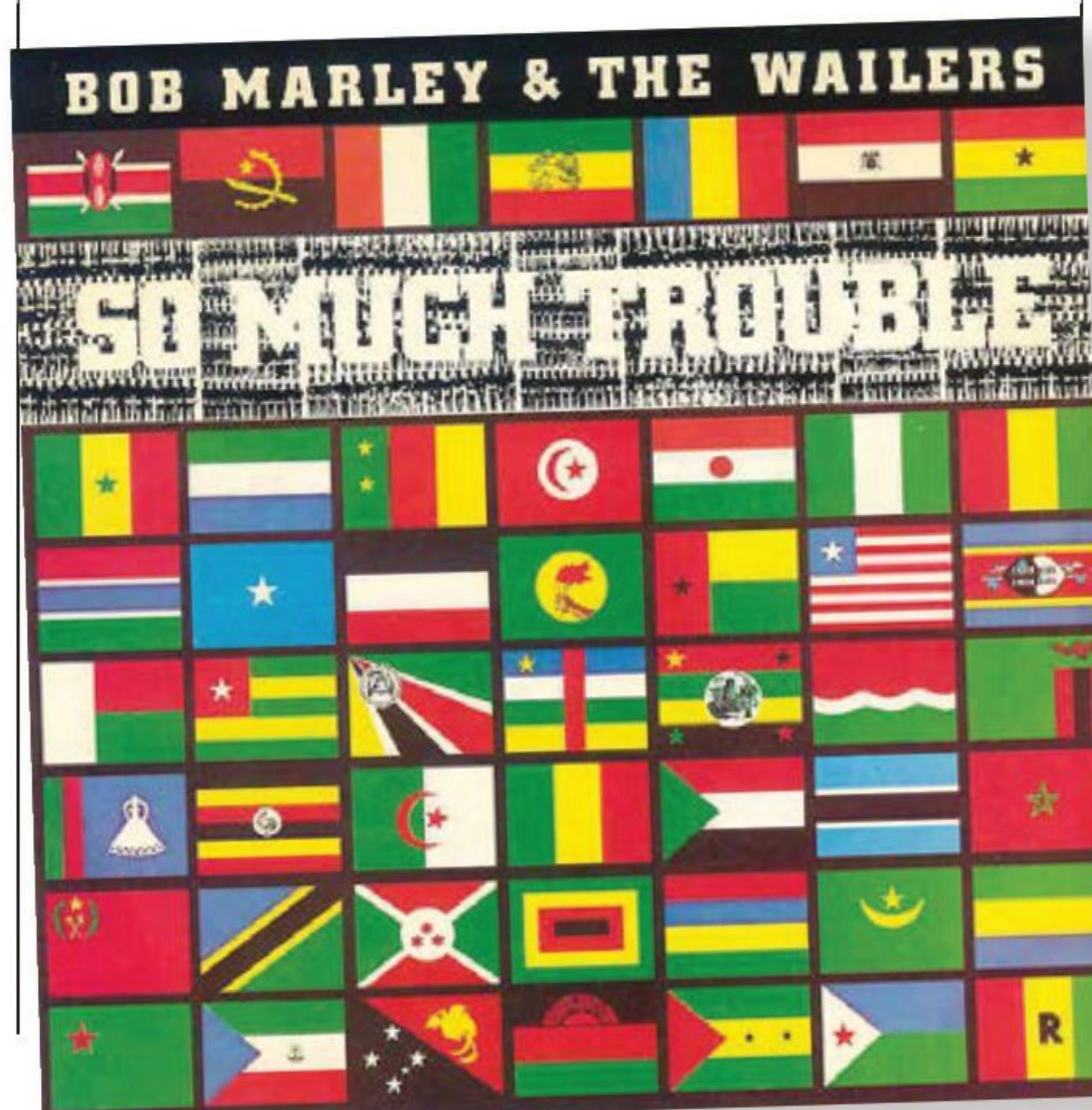
"ME WANT FE SEE NEW YORK PAINT RED GOLD AND GREEN" BOB MARLEY

despatches business decisively, warms to his visitors quickly.

He's acutely conscious of energy conservation, and rests up plenty for the gruelling round of travel and stageshows, always finding time for relaxation – soccer, reasoning, laughter.

"Anytime you can't laugh you're foolish, tension get you mash," he tells me.

His religion is no mere adjunct to his life and art but the constant foundation of everything he says and does. There are a lot of cynical attitudes



around towards Rasta, based mainly on the central Rastafarian tenet that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was/is God incarnate (Rastas have never accepted his death), and sometimes compounded by a degree of racism, not to mention pure ignorance of the way Rastas actually conduct their lives.

In any case, the days when Marley felt obliged to explain his Rastafarian ideals and beliefs to a white audience have evidently gone for the most part. "We are what we are/That's the way it's going to be," he sings on *Survival*. Certainly I'm left in little doubt from either the album or our conversation that Bob Marley is tired of having to justify himself to unsympathetic ears.

Whatever you think of Marley, his beliefs and his music, the fact remains that he and his associates are sustaining in an altogether remarkable way. Few major rock stars at the age of 34 can boast the same on- and offstage vitality, commitment and creative genius that Marley continues to exhibit and which shows scant signs of disappearing. That the future holds new developments seems extremely likely, with Africa looming as the next target for musical conquest.

Our conversation proceeds in its usual slightly erratic manner, Marley shifting from prophetic solemnity to hearty laughter with disarming swiftness. Jamaican is a language that loses much from transposition to the printed page.

SINCE I last saw you, you've been to Africa, which on the evidence of *Survival* has had an enormous effect... You mean "Africa Unite", "Zimbabwe" and dem stuff? Yeah, it's true.

Did you go to Zimbabwe? No, just across Kenya to Ethiopia, but when I was in Ethiopia there was a big thing there for Zimbabwe, some big t'ing. It means a lot to the people there.

How did Africa compare to your imagination of it? It was like I imagined and more than I could imagine.

You've often talked and written of the movement of black people back to Africa. How are they going to fit in there if they've grown up somewhere like America or Britain? Well whoever want to return there will... put themselves towards it. 'Cos once you wanna do it then you'll do it. It's a force you can accept or not. It could be like, in time of flood people have to evacuate. Maybe all the people will have to evacuate the West (laughs). Never can tell... (Marley's person aide interrupts): Could be a nuclear power job...

Well, Africa isn't polluted with nukes like the West – but still South Africa has nuclear power now.

Aide: Dat is just System that bring about that pollution, get rid of the System and pollution a go. That's what we're about to do.

BM: Yeah, man.

So you think any means necessary to do that is justified? The gun?

BM (sombrely): If necessary.

Aide: Check how much people dead in Africa ➤

nowadays. If it continue same way there could be a million dead, so we have to come to a solution – one time one fight with maybe 250,000 people dead, seen? So it better it just happen so than this constant killing and killing.

Are you gonna play Africa, Bob? YES!

Would you play South Africa if the present government allowed you to? Me no play South Africa 'til South Africa free, because them neutralise everything. Anything the people want them must get it...

Do black Africans recognise the divinity of Haile Salassie? Well, Ethiopia is the only place that never got colonised, so you find most of the places that were colonised by French, English, you find their way of life and teachings exist there now, so the whole thing now is if these people gonna prefer the teaching of France or dem gonna prefer the teaching of His Majesty. So I figure when dem realise the whole world run off ideology in a sense, then they realise His Majesty the best and when you check it out you find His Majesty is God so it double right.

His Majesty never make any deal with any country fe get any atomic weapon in Ethiopia. If Him want Him could be friend with Russia or America or build up all sort o' t'ings like others do, but because the black man have to remain a people and dem have to seek dem own light him nah do that. But he stand up and defend our rights so today we can be so proud, to look in a man's conscience and see who's right and who's wrong.

Right now Ethiopia lean on Russia. If Russia draw away then Ethiopia drop. His Majesty know that, Him wan fe stand as a people, Him no wan' lean on anyone. It's like Him seh: "Time and history shall record their judgment." It's a time thing.

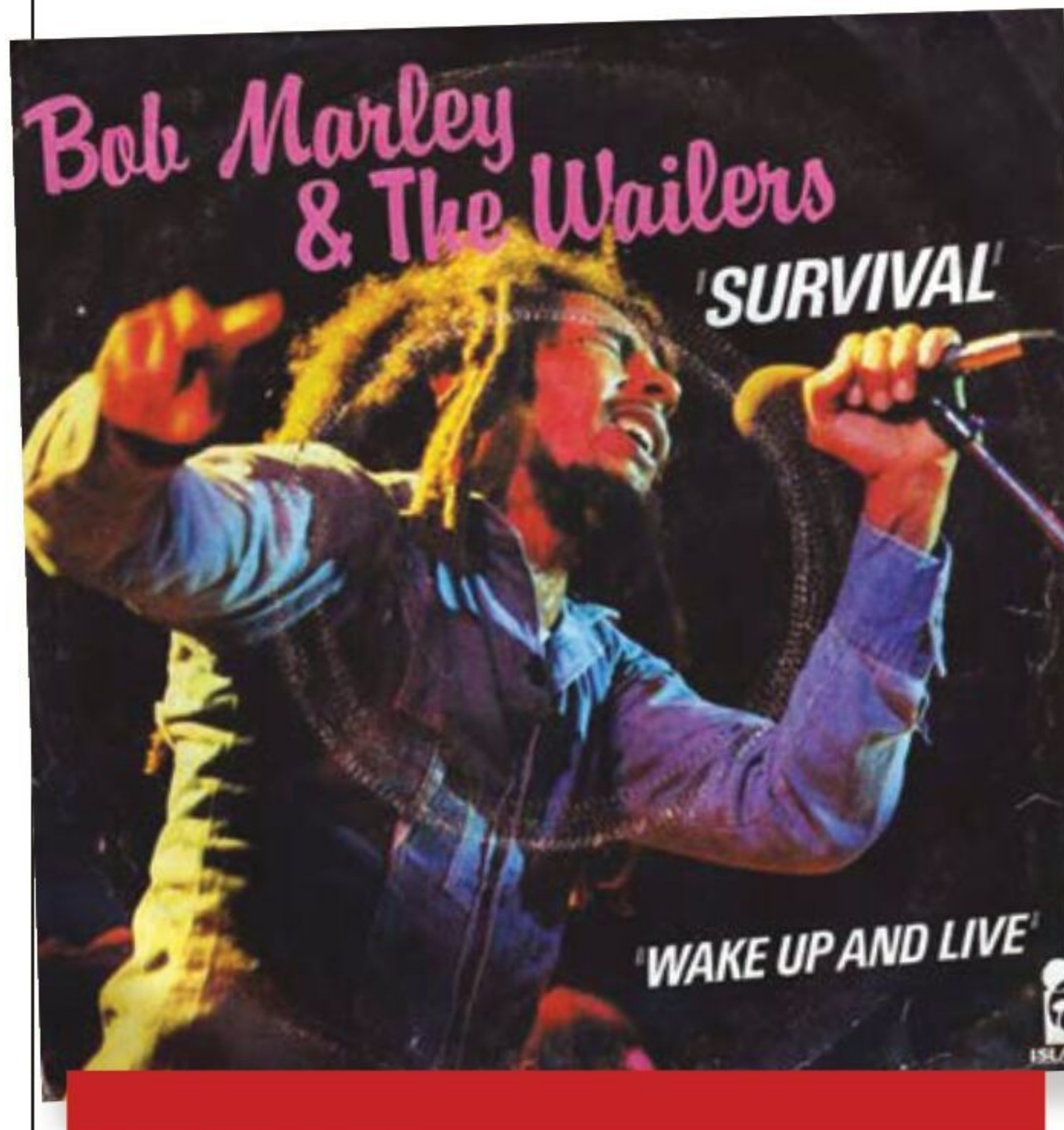
How should Black Americans be reorienting themselves do you think? Dem 'ave fe get dem unity in one direction... Marcus Garvey preach that we must look to the East for when a new king come for our leader, and in 1930 Haile Selassie come so black people must know what is them leader, seen? Russia take Communism, America take capitalism, black people have fe tek Rastafari. It's just a thing like that. You might get people from America love Rastafari and people from anywhere love Rastafari but the world powers fight it. For a longer time them fight against Ethiopia and against His Majesty and against anything black man say or do.

Marcus Garvey come and they kill him, any man come up from when he start deal with Black them say him dangerous. But until the black man united then the whole world is in trouble same ways, because God don't give Man grief; Him give black man the wisdom of understanding, the white man the wisdom of technology and the Arab wealth, them have all the oil and stuff. So it's just three t'ing.

It seems that 10 years ago or so Black Americans started to think independently from the system and then that energy disappeared... What happen is that dem no

approach it right. If you're dealing with black power you 'ave fe deal with Rastafari, that is the truth and that is spiritual on the people. It might be hard fe dem really catch on to it bwoy but me a tell you, is it. Because there are a million t'ing in America, you can go anywhere, see anything. Everywhere you look is more shops full o' high heel shoes and all dis fashion ting dat gwan. So terrible y'know. Stop look and there is 75 different styles. Your poor head! You never really see anything as life. Everything round you is life still but you don't really see anything that's the real thing, everything is just zzzzzzzzzzzttttt... Eat your brains, sprain you foot, it get you weak man.

Well they smoke plenty of herb here, it's almost legal... Yeh mon, me want fe see the whole o' New York paint red, gold and green (laughs). Rastaman must have him place y'know. When me go to Ethiopia me see some painting of red, gold and green, it look like it about 45 years old, the colour wash off. And when you go to Jamaica man have him red, gold and green thing the same way. So we gwan live y'know, we have our life. Everything that red, gold and green pass through ... Raasclaat! I know red, gold and green look terrible to people who nah know 'bout it. It's threatening, it look like judgment, 'cos when this earth fly the red, gold and



**"JUDGMENT
GONNA BE
TERRIBLE,
WORSE MAN
EVER SEEN"**
BOB MARLEY

green flag all about, you know, the Judgment pass.

During my time when I was a young lickle Rasta youth me just try to enjoy myself in Rasta work, when me see anything red, gold and green me check it serious, like it's coming as a message. When me look 'pon the street life me see that red, gold and green control the earth for watch it: anywhere you go on earth the stop light is red, gold and green. It's scientific and psychological. Y'see

all dem stoplight stick on red, gold and green it [breaks into laughter]. A different t'ing dat again. People can relate to it, it's a control thing you carry in a memory box...

What you say about the present time being a judgment time; history's definitely speeding up, it's accelerating as it gets closer to the centre of its spiral...

God seh Him shorten the days, that means the days get much quicker, everything that happens quick...

Most people aren't at all ready for this.

People have fe suffer in a Babylon and dead in a Babylon and it still plenty people gonna save. 'Cos we have a whole heap o' judgment y'know. Yeah mon, judgment gonna be terrible, worse man ever seen. Check out how a little place like Jamaica was hit a little while ago by floods – a big judgment that, for a little island.

So you can just imagine how America this size get a lick [blow] dat size – same size lick 'cos Jah no partial. Terrible, mon...

YOU told Vivien Goldman that you respected Bob Dylan. Have you heard his new album, *Slow Train Coming*?

No, me read about it but don't hear it yet.

It's about The Judgment. There's a line, I think from Revelation: "Can you imagine the darkness/That will fall from on high/When men will beg God to kill them/And they won't be able to die." Yeah mon, these days are funny – man wanna die, 'im can't die, yeah, change all 'im heart and 'im live still and suffer. That's no good.

Do you think people who survive the judgment time will live forever in the flesh? That's what I read you thought. Yeah, the people who survive will live, 'cos the only thing that can make you survive is to know the truth and the truth is that God seh Him give man everlasting life, which means everliving life. Me seh my life here, dis flesh, me have fe live. Me never seh there was no fear of death but me no deal with death, me no have time to risk this flesh too much, 'cos it's this me have to do it in.

The spirit is stronger than the flesh, which means the flesh is nothing for the spirit to carry. That mean there's a way to live. There's a way man, it can be done. That's where Rastafari come in 'cos everyone else preach when you die you go to heaven... No, I don't like that one.

Why not? 'Cos if when I dead I go to heaven, then where was I before I am? If heaven's the right place where I was before I am then I should have stayed there.

Maybe the journey of the spirit means you have to carry this flesh awhile then move on elsewhere... The thing is you can't say 'the spirit' – I can only see what I see in front of me, y'unnerstan? So dis is reality and the time is short, 'cos you never can tell, a new breeze can blow, is God create y'know, 'Im can do anything.

But we were just saying that to change the system in Africa many people will lose their lives – so what happens to them? Their spirit must carry on. Well is God who shelter the ➤

"Dis reality and
the time is short":
soundchecking at
the Apollo, 1979



spirit 'cos there only one God which is the spirit, so it's not different different spirit, it's one spirit and different different man, man have different different ways of doing things.

In any case people don't look after themselves, their flesh, enough. I feel so too. I don't think they look after it 'cos them get bad habit of eating, never learn to eat right thing in the beginning. Them teach you the wrong taste – bitter is sweet mon, and sweetness bitterness. That is how things become miserable, because people don't get enough bitterness in their life, them tek things that are sweet to the lips but bitter to the flesh.

I'm sure that's one reason people can't think straight, they eat so much junk. Lately you hear 'Don't tek sugar, don't do this or that' because from the beginning you shouldn't eat that... We no get killed in our flesh, mon. One day you might see that where a man live is not food – because it's a raasclaat t'ing higher than food, it's not even the food you eat, though there are certain foods you mustn't eat, but the real food is this, what you take in, when you walk 'pon the street how easy your mind is, how much tension. People live in tension all the while which draw you and cripple you... and that is what hurt people now. People have more a mind problem than a food problem.

WHAT do you feel happiest about that you've achieved so far? That you've maybe woken people up? Yeah, me feel good that plenty people is aware that there is something happening. Man can check it out 'cos I know Rasta grow, I don't see it deteriorate, I watch them and they grow more and more. It might not be in the headlines every day but dem grow.

And all over the world too. Yeh, man, some place I go people receptive to this thing o' mine. They're willing to accept you 'cos dem see't for themselves, I don't know how dem know but dem know. It go anywhere... me go a Japan and Chinaman know the truth and 'im accept it, just free...

You've never seen it as a race thing? No, it's not really a race thing in that sense because a whole heap of people from all nation, kindred and tongue follow the Rasta movement. Is dat the Bible seh. But is really a black man organisation 'cos the white man nah know about it in that sense, the black man have the knowledge to hold that thing there while the white man him study fe mek all things a go to space. 'Im study too much, 'im get lost... but today there's no turning back, come too far and turn back now, it just mus' have fe go... But some people a go save still and all these people are one people who believe in something, believe in God, fear of true conscience and the works of Ras Tafari.

Reggae seems to be a universal rhythm; they dig it in Europe, America, Africa, Japan ... Yeh man, everyone, no matter which raasclaat place 'im come from speak to His Majesty and hear him seh: "Until the philosophy that hold one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned" – until



this, until that the way that speech go... Hear Him say this and the whole of Africa have to jump it. Him even seh that to Castro and 'im have to bloodclaat jump it. Say it to Russia and dem have to jump to it. Y'see Ras Tafari am God man. Raasclaat! That one statement alone mek Him God...

I'd have thought Castro was helping liberate Africa after what you said earlier. If Castro go help Jamaica, Jamaica go socialist. And if America go help Jamaica, then it go capitalist. Suppose if Jamaica were Rasta then no-one would be interested. Go deeper and see what survival Rastaman would have if the government would run Jamaica Rasta.

Psychological warfare go on with germs mix in it. A terrible war, mon. Because check the war in Ethiopia now and seh 'blah blah bum bum'... Dem seh Ethiopia starve and write it down as history. Well alright, look and see – if them know the people starving why them never come help if so kind? No, them butcher and conquer and capture. So dem nah go help so nah bow to them. So this is how His Majesty the best again 'cos him never bow to them. I know dem have technology, technological understanding but dem nah help you with it. That's because the technology is God to them and dem no know God.

Have you seen Lee Perry recently, Bob? Is he OK? Yeh, mon.

We've heard strange reports in England that he's gone crazy. Mebbe the Punky Reggae get to him (laughs all round)... Scratch alright, mon.

Are you glad you made that record? "Punky Reggae Party"? Me glad me do it y'know. Really. A lot of people seh it was kinda letdown thing, that I let myself down. I did still y'know. But still something seh try get into it a

lickle, with "Rejected by society" and dem t'ing... but Punky Reggae is not really my thing, me prefer to leave them people alone, try to get more of a spiritual type o'thing.

What did you think to African music? Well dem have a different music, some couldn't even understand. When I see people dance I realise how wide music can be, 'cos I know music a play and me can't dance to it but me see people dance to it and dance good too. Me want fe dance wid dem nuff to see if me can feel it, 'cos y'can't just feel it so, it different... Far East, Far East Rasta, a man sing some raasclaat tune deh. Me go a club see a bredren sing and the man can sing. When me go to Ethiopia me no expect anything like that.

You were just looking at the *Intensified* album – there's a bit of a rude boy craze in England right now, white youth more than black. What do you think of that, as one of the originals? There's tension everywhere, too much tension...

You don't think that being a rude boy is the answer to tension? Well it help – at least you become rebellious for roots stand for rebel. It must work out because Jamaica now just jump on Rasta – the youth dem no pass Jah but still people just call dem Rude Bwoy and dem rude boy become Rasta, so alla dem rebel; rude, Rasta... for if me never know there was a God one time when I walk as a youth me was well well rude and well well bad to man but me

Natty dreads: on stage at the Apollo, November 22, 1979



always know seh, “Well boy me can’t hit a next one. Me feel so strong me ’ave to defend him.”

The Pope was in New York recently. Did you read about it? He played Madison Square Garden and Shea Stadium, it was like rock’n’roll gigs. He’s even got a record out.

It chart yet? There are 70 million people a go buy it, dem buy’t man. The Pope have a No 1 tune to bloodclaat! Well don’t think I wanna sing again inna dis... Pope have the No 1 spot but that no bloodclaat good for we mek a No 1 tune, do you hear? And then the whole record business get more interesting, more meaningful. You’d have the Pope, you’d have Rasta, and Rasta lick ’gainst the Pope and ’im can’t survive! If him enter record business him can’t survive. Dem who go to disco and to rockers leave him right out man [laughs]. Seventy million people members, y’know. When him dead 70 million dead with him. Seventy million people really wanna dead? Dem soon find out ’im just a figurehead. Babylonian... Rome, y’know, is the heights the devil is in, him is the Anti-Christ because dem know Haile Selassie is the Christ but dem no tell it.

How do you feel about Christians? Not Roman Catholics but say Christians who believe that the Pope is the Anti-Christ too?

Well the poor Christians never get a chance to understand yet. Someplace people misinterpret something. If a man come up with no great education more than read and pick up the Bible and

**“WE NO LEAN
ON ANYONE
’COS WE IS
RASTA”
BOB MARLEY**

see “God is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe Of Judah” and seh, “Oh my suffering life, look out who is the conquering lion of the tribe of Judah ’cos me a suffer and from me a suffer me have nothing to lose.” And ’im look out deh and see Haile Selassie and know ’Im God.

Me accept him in flesh, spirit and truth, and Him show himself to me in different ways and mek me surer. Everyday see I Him. Even when you run it down to ideology ’Im have the best. Like you have Marx, Lenin, or capital way and even there ’Im is the best.

A lot of people look at Ethiopia and see a poor starving country and they wonder why Selassie did nothing to help his people.

Well, yes... Is true God is God, Him don’t live like a film show, there’s a whole international universal world in front of him. Because Him seated in

Ethiopia dat nah mean Him love the people more than somewhere else.

When you tek conscience in a man now, all the people who seh Ethiopia was starving, dem coulda help feed the people. ’Cos big America knew, big Russia knew, big anyone knew but nobody give any help. Dem no wanna give anything without you take capitalism or Communism with it.

I check it another way again; in the days when Mussolini attacked Ethiopia him spray mustard gas and I am saying today that them spread famine gas, so even if the people eat them crippled same way. This is just war strategy.

But who have eyes to see will se’t y’know. ’Cos it’s just mankind a do it to mankind, whether they come from Russia, Africa or anywhere, just mankind on the face of the Earth. But man will be kinder to man. Pure propaganda them spread ’pon His Majesty, international propaganda.

We no lean on anyone ’cos we is Rasta. We’re not sold any hype. It’s very dangerous too because when you’re Rasta you stand up inna middle and that’s dangerous, you come like the blaze between the fire – y’have two pieces of wood and the blaze come between, the two piece of wood catch a fire.

[Loudly] But I and I no fight fe nothing, y’know – we is what we is, we supply the way prophecy run it, that in this time now we come to our heritage of culture, our ancient culture on Earth. As it was in the beginning so shall it be in the end because in the beginning everything was perfect and so everything have to go back to perfection again. 🙏

UPRISING

RELEASED 10 JUNE 1980

Bob Marley writes his own epitaph... "Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom?/'Cause all I ever have/Redemption songs." BY NEIL SPENCER

NO-ONE knows when Bob Marley realised he was not long for this world, but by the time he and the Wailers came to record *Uprising* at the beginning of 1980, mortality was certainly on his mind. How could it not

be? Death had been an all too close companion to the singer over recent years. He had survived an assassination attempt and a health scare, when the big toe of his right foot was found to be cancerous and operated upon. And though Marley had responded to the murder of Hailie Selassie (by Ethiopia's Marxist regime) with the defiant "Jah Live", the Ethiopian Emperor remained dead. So too did a number of ranking JA gunmen, many of them known to Marley, caught up in Kingston's criminal and political feuds; Claudie Massop, one of the organisers of the Peace Concert, had been gunned down by police in early '79.

It is hard to listen to *Uprising* and feel that Marley, a man of powerful intuition, did not suspect his days were numbered. The record is bookended by two songs that stalk the borderline between life and death with extraordinary poesy and poise. "Coming In From The Cold" and "Redemption Song" alone lend *Uprising* profundity; nor are they the only tracks with deep resonance. On the back cover Adrian Boot's shot of The

Wailers showed a weary, unsmiling Bob among his glowing band members (though with no I Threes).

The album was conceived as the second of a trilogy, between *Survival* and *Confrontation*. In that respect *Uprising* must be accounted off-message; there is way more insubordination and rebellion on *Catch A Fire*, *Burnin'* and *Natty Dread*. Neville Garrick's striking cover depicts Marley as an elemental force bursting from the ground, but the songs inside tell a different story, a matrix of interlocking themes: devotion, reflection, worthiness, honesty, failure. Its music is diverse, embracing disco, roots reggae, funk and acoustic balladry, while its moods are ambiguous and contradictory.

Take opener "Coming In From The Cold". It sounds bright, but its subject isn't. When Marley moulds the time-worn maxim "*When one door closes, another opens*" to a typically appealing melody, is he just singing about the need for optimism and not letting "*the system get on top of your head again*"? Or is he talking about the transition to an afterlife? The title refrain suggests that there was a precursor to our lives here – the cold – and the line "*Why do you look so sad and forsaken?*" would in less than a year's time seem that Marley was talking to his fans about his own passing.

Rasta theology had never been clear about death and an afterlife. While Bunny Wailer sang about us all being "Reincarnated Souls", others, like Peter Tosh, ➤



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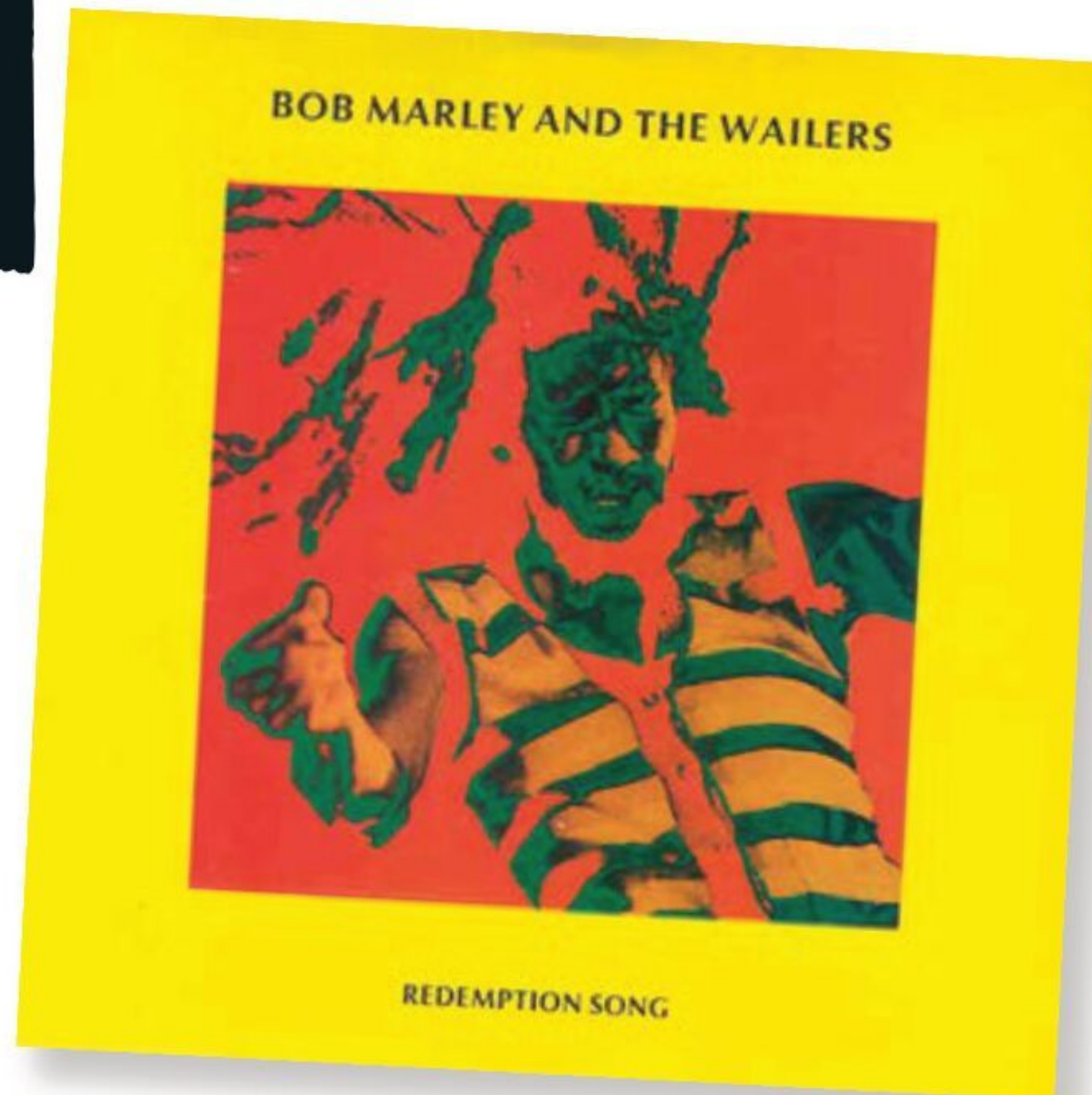
would insist that “*When you’re dead you’re dead.*” Nah go a dem funeral! (Nor did Tosh attend Marley’s funeral.)

“Real Situation” is another contradiction, a jaunty jogalong warning that humanity’s predisposition to war (“*Where did it begin?*”) means “*total destruction’s the only solution*”. The song goes further; there’s no point even trying to resist the warmongers because “*no-one can stop them now*”. It’s ironic, of course, but previously “*no-one can stop us now*” would have been a more likely refrain.

“Bad Card” takes us back to classic Marley territory, mocking rivals who are “*tired a go see me face*” but “*can’t get me out of the race*”. The song shifts into another mode when Marley declares that tonight his hi-fi will disturb his neighbours, then there is a sidestep into “*guarding the palace so majestic*”, a seeming reference to Selassie (there are no other “majesties” in his world, other than perhaps women).

Marley’s current situation illuminates the song instantly. After he had acquired the deeds to 56 Hope Road in 1975, Marley liked to jest that he had “moved the ghetto uptown”. Hope Road was prime Kingston real estate, a neighbourhood of plush gardens and shady verandas, a far cry from the harshness and heat of the ghetto. The property had been in Chris Blackwell’s family for generations, purchased by his mother’s great uncle. When Blackwell started his music business in the 1960s, 56 Hope Road became his headquarters, Island House, later mutating into Tuff Gong’s rehearsal studios and HQ, then into one of Marley’s homes and, eventually, housing his own studios. Today it’s the Bob Marley museum.

Not all of his neighbours were happy about these developments. 56 Hope Road, a large property in an acre of ground, became the hub not just for Marley’s sprawling entourage of band, family, brethren and mistresses, but a magnet for journalists, tourists, and all manner of hustlers, drifters and dutty Rastas. Neighbours were particularly incensed by music being pumped out; at the time of *Uprising*, Michigan And Smiley’s “One Love Jamdown”, a Tuff Gong release and



a massive hit, blasted non-stop. Neighbours protested that the use of the building had changed from domestic to business use, but in vain. Bob Marley was by now the most famous Jamaican alive, impossible to “*get out of the race*”. “Bad Card”’s triumphant feeling is

reminiscent of the refrain from “Kaya”: “*Feel so good in my neighbourhood so here I come again.*”

The contrast with “We And Them” is stark. Here the sound turns murky, the mood introverted, as Marley wonders how biblical justice might arrive; it’s hard to think of another song in his canon that addresses puzzlement, even failure, so blatantly. “Work” switches the mood once more. Musically it lopes along somewhere between ’60s rocksteady and ’70s soul, a fusion caught brilliantly by Al Anderson’s introductory guitar part, the song’s metronomic rhythm recalling numbers like Nat Adderley’s “Work Song” or John Handy’s “Hard Work”. It’s a cleverly ambiguous song. On one hand its countdown lyrics are about the sweat and graft of the daily grind – “*Three days to go, working for the next day*” – to which the I Three’s creamy vocals provide balm, but the essence of the song is about “*Jah people making it work*” – “it” being the great project.

‘Work’ was not a four-letter word for Marley. He believed in graft and, even now he was a superstar, the work ethic prevailed. Writing, rehearsals, recording and touring were at the centre of his life – his musicians would sometimes complain (not too loudly) about what he asked from them. But Marley’s belief in his mission was absolute.

Side One of *Uprising* already makes the album unlike any previous offering. Side Two’s opener, “Zion Train”, is lazy by comparison. It’s an amenable enough piece, but it’s no standout among pop’s vast array of railroad songs – say Johnny Cash’s “Train Of Love” or The O’ Jays’ “Love Train” – while reggae had its own genre of train songs, among them Peter Tosh’s “Stop That Train”, Big Youth’s “Leaving On That Train”, and U-Brown’s sound-system hit “Train To Zion”. Marley’s song does,

however, act as a palliative for the rest of the album.

“Pimper’s Paradise” is a more intriguing song. In 1980 ‘pimp’ was not as widespread a term as it later became, and Marley pulls no punches with his portrait of a good-time girl who likes parties, smoke and coke, the kind of woman he was increasingly encountering in the world of superstardom. It’s more than a put-down record, however; the chorus of “*every ego got an ego to feed*” and the closing “*Don’t be a stock on the shelf*” ask for individualism.

Marley had grown increasingly frustrated by his inability to crack the black American market. Europe, Japan, Brazil and Africa had, in their way, all fallen under his spell, as had much of white America. Black America remained stubbornly resistant to reggae, however. Previous waves of music from the Caribbean and beyond – mambo, calypso, salsa, bossa nova – had likewise appealed mostly to white America. In 1980 black America remained in the grip of funk and disco – the SOS Band, George Benson, Sister Sledge topped the R&B charts – and its aspirations were embodied by slick, upmarket heroes like Michael Jackson and Diana Ross. Hip-hop was in its infancy.

CRITICS’ VERDICT

“I lost my early delight in Marley several records ago, but the new album makes more sense than anything since the great days of ‘Trenchtown Rock’ and ‘No Woman, No Cry’. Marley has matured with his music, and *Uprising* is something of a mellow masterpiece.”
JOHN NORME, MELODY MAKER, JUNE 14, 1980

“A statement of consolidation, a tactical retreat from the frontline to consider strategy... *Uprising* is in no way a pretty-pretty album à la *Kaya*... It’s a return to strict Jamaican basics.”
VIVIEN GOLDMAN, NME, JULY 5, 1980

TRACKMARKS UPRISING

- 1 Coming In From The Cold ★★★★★
- 2 Real Situation ★★★
- 3 Bad Card ★★★★★
- 4 We And Them ★★★
- 5 Work ★★★★★
- 6 Zion Train ★★★
- 7 Pimper’s Paradise ★★★

- 8 Could You Be Loved ★★★★★
- 9 Forever Loving Jah ★★★
- 10 Redemption Song ★★★★★

Label: Island Records
Produced by: Bob Marley

Recorded at: Tuff Gong, Kingston, JA
Personnel: Bob Marley (vocals, guitar), Aston Barrett (bass guitar, piano, percussion), Carlton Barrett (drums, percussion), Carlton Davis (drums), Tyrone

Downie (keys, vocals), Alvin Patterson (percussion), Junior Marvin (guitar, vocals), Earl Lindo (keys), Al Anderson (guitar), Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt, Marcia Griffiths (vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 6, US 45



'Roots' was the title of a TV series about slavery, not a badge of pride. Garvey's 'Back To Africa' movement was distant history.

Yet black America had always been Marley's most desired audience, the key to the 'exodus' of Africans back to the motherland. In autumn 1979 he had played three nights at Harlem's Apollo specifically to make the crossover that never quite happened in his lifetime, and by the time Stevie Wonder paid handsome tribute to Marley on "Master Blaster" (which made No 1 on the R&B charts in late 1980), Marley was terminally ill.

"Could You Be Loved" was thus an attempt to capture black America's attention. It's a wonderfully catchy number that bubbles along on a hybrid reggae-funk rhythm, with a killer chorus that inverts pop's usual 'I love you, hope you love me' sentiments to ask whether each of us have what it takes to deserve love. Its admonition that "*While you point your finger, someone else is judging you*" harks back to the very start of Marley's career on "Judge Not", and its urging to "*stay alive*" carries another touch of mortality.

Not everyone was impressed by what was claimed, again, to be Bob's dilution of

THE LP IS DIVERSE, EMBRACING DISCO, REGGAE, FUNK AND ACOUSTIC BALLADRY

reggae for a pop audience. Reggae purists had been complaining of his 'sell-out' ever since *Catch A Fire*. This misses the point several times over. Firstly, reggae was pop, and The Wailers had started out singing "What's New Pussycat" alongside Bob Dylan numbers. In any case Marley had become a genre in his own right, and his hybrid strain of reggae would become widely copied; reggae mix-ups would subsequently be a staple of 'world music', from Paris to Dakar to Rio to New York.

"Forever Loving Jah" slows the pace abruptly. Again, it's hardly in accord with the notion of an uprising. Rather it's a beautiful Rasta hymn, studded with

biblical references like "*what has been hidden from the wise has been revealed to the babe and suckling*". In tone and lyric it's less about engagement with the outside world than retreating into the sanctity of belief and devotion.

When Marley had presented the finished tapes of *Uprising* to Chris Blackwell, the Island supremo had sprung a surprise with his opinion that the singer "had something more to give". The next day Marley returned with "Redemption Song", a number he had been working on for a year or more. It remains an astonishing work, in part a reckoning with history and the scars left by slavery, in part a victory call – "*We forward in this generation, triumphantly.*" It embraces anguish – "*How long shall they kill our prophets?*" – and prophecy – "*None of them can stop the time.*" At the same time it's a piece of acute self-reckoning, with Bob being no easier on himself than he was with others; "*All I ever had, redemption songs.*" Sung solo to an acoustic guitar, "Redemption Song" was not only a summary of Marley's philosophy, but a lament for his own passing. No poet ever wrote their own epitaph more clearly. 🕯

Traffic jammin' with Marley & co, 1980

MEDIA PRESS/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



"You think anything can kill me?"

June 1980: Bob Marley & The Wailers (plus incongruous supporting cast) play one more triumphant show at the Crystal Palace Garden Party in London. But, by the end of the year, an American tour has been cancelled and disquieting rumours are circulating about the health of a seemingly indestructible musical icon...





NME
14/06/1980

“...THE poets of negroism oppose the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa, tiresome reasoning to lyricism, oppressive logic to a high stepping nature.” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*

SO let’s dance! OK. Even Marley, potentially the most important political entertainer alive, seemed content to follow the Wailers’ imperative beat along with most everybody else on Saturday. It was that kind of day.

The dippy logic that held sway had scores of otherwise sensible fully clothed adults wallowing like hippos in the muddy lake separating the stage and crowd. Others more irresponsibly perched in the charming willow trees surrounding the site. One eventually snapped under the strain, its unnecessary destruction greeted in some quarters by heavy cheers. As already noted, it was that kind of day.

The audience’s one rational moment was their mud-slinging reply to Joe Jackson’s bad-mouthing. If the stupid prat thought he could consolidate the current critical swing in his favour through ill-tempered harangues, then he’s dumber than his manner suggested.

Some new songs indicated that he’s too bright to plumb such levels. The black “The Evil Eye”, touching on voodooism and butchery in Peckham, sounded fun, highlighted as it was by the tasteful line “I got The Cramps on the stereo”. But mostly he resorted to Stranglers-styled belligerent boogying, which intimidated some into applause, but turned off as many others; me included.

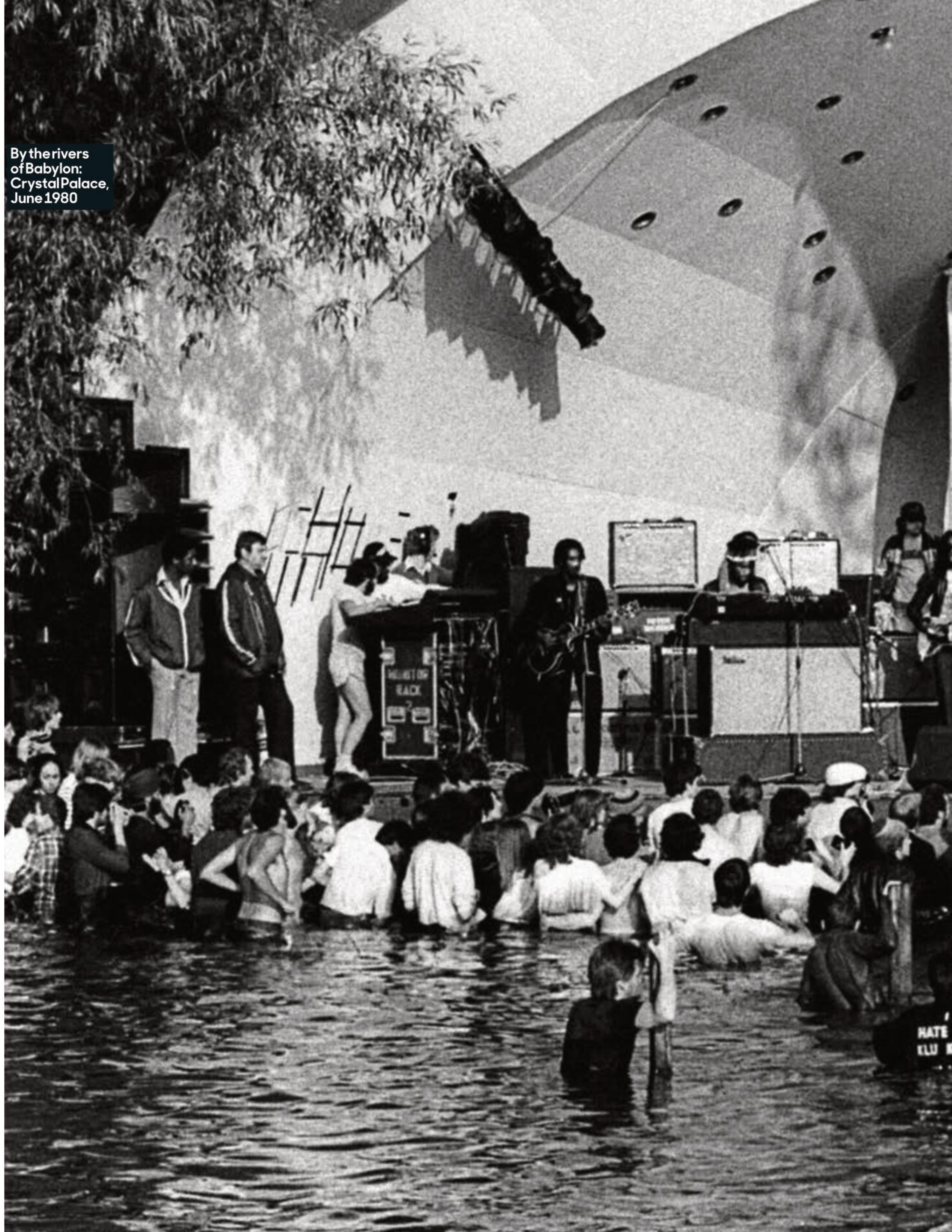
Maybe Jackson thought it his duty to disrupt the soporific atmosphere of the event until his spot. Lord knows the Average White Band gave him good cause. Their languid riffing lapsed into plain laziness, with odd moments of tension quickly dissipating once the pattern of false endings was established. All sweetness and light and no shade. They wouldn’t have noticed if we left and vice versa.

Q-Tips’ singer Paul Young’s fixed grin implied a like rigidity, but he still looked vulnerable enough to be affected by an audience. His obsessive love for old soul is genuine enough, but why he should want to mimic the masters’ styles so faithfully is unnatural. His mannerisms and the band’s relentless efficiency make them a good showband and not much else, although their cabaret presentation worked surprisingly well on 20,000 people, too. That’s down to their strong ensemble playing and a clever non-stop programming of standards, like “Tracks Of My Years”, “S.Y.S.L.J.F.M”, “How Sweet It Is To Be Loved By You” and “Sweet Soul Music”. They were more popular than DJ Andy Dunkley – he must have left his copy of *This Is Soul* at home.

Marley’s importance as a crossover artist shouldn’t be overlooked or denied. Whatever people’s attractions to him – his beautifully taut singing, the increasing disco sophistication of the Wailers, or what he has to say – they’ve placed him in the enviable position of a militant with a potentially large audience. Going by his last LP, *Survival*, he hasn’t yet shirked his responsibilities.

Obviously many people at Crystal Palace came for the Event or the hits, but I doubt that they were

By the rivers of Babylon: Crystal Palace, June 1980



disappointed. Having recently returned from Zimbabwe’s independence celebrations, Marley and the Wailers are currently expressing their elation with the birth of a new black state through a set of renewed ardour, in which their belief in Rastafarianism combines with a more embracing spiritual love.

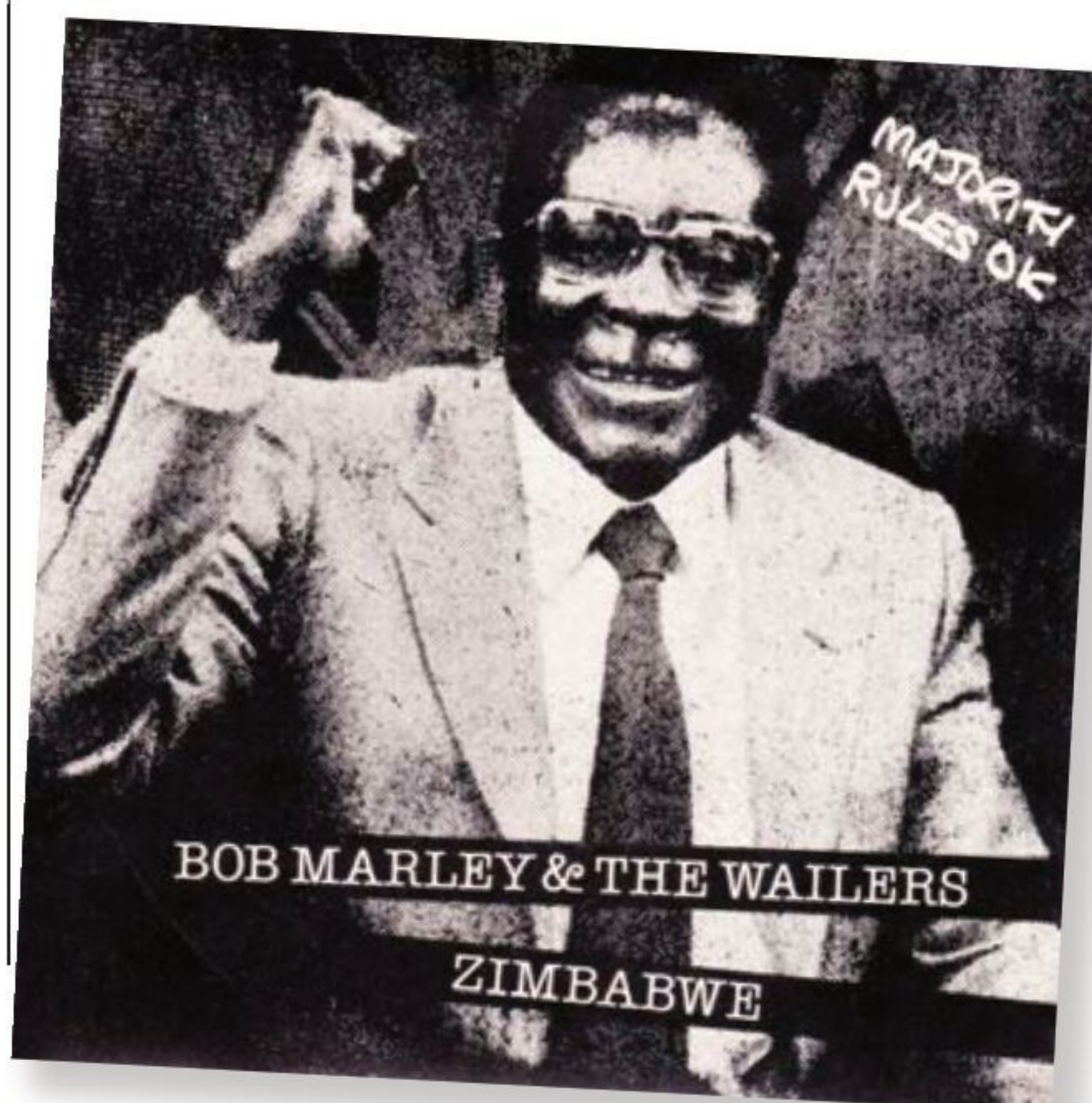
The post-revolutionary awareness of *Exodus* seems especially fitting now, and consequently “Jamming” and “Exodus” played out the set. The Wailers’ superbly confident, yet gentle rhythms supported Marley’s ailing voice. Earlier they radically improved “Rastaman Vibration” by

fleshing out the dull purity of the original album track, and throughout they played with cool poise.

They reinforced their hardness with the warning shot “War”, the victory song “Zimbabwe” and the resilient “I Shot The Sheriff”, revitalised by the I Threes’ assertive back-up. Of the new songs, one boldly identified them with their roots: “We don’t have no friends inna high society.”

But the most revealing was Marley’s acoustic “Redemption Song”, which had him singing, ironically judging from the song’s tone: “Won’t you help me sing/ Another song of freedom/ Because all I hear/ Redemption songs.” He sang it with a sly hint of mockery that belied the seriousness of the subject of slave trading. Very strange, but I’ll wait to hear it properly before making up my mind.

Marley and the Wailers still cut it. With the passing of time they’re getting smoother, but at the same time more ruthless, and Marley the Warrior hasn’t lain down his sword yet. Someday he’ll possibly face similar problems to other political entertainers, of keeping the momentum and spirit alive, but as his political beliefs are deeper rooted in his Rasta faith and the more concrete struggle of the Third World, they’re a lot harder to lose sight of. He’s made diversions before (*Kaya*) and then come back. And with Zimbabwe’s victory still fresh he’s hardly likely to stop now. **CHRIS BOHN**





DISQUIETING rumours about Bob Marley's health continue to circulate alleging that the star is suffering from a brain tumour or similar cancer, and that this is the reason Marley has recently been ensconced in a New York cancer hospital.

The rumours have brought denials from Marley's record company, his wife Rita, and in a taped message distributed to US radio stations, from Marley himself. He is said to be suffering from "complete exhaustion", and is now in the south of Ethiopia "for complete rest".

The rumours first started a few weeks ago when Marley cancelled an American tour and checked into hospital in New York. Island Records claim that Marley's time there and at other hospitals in Miami, Jamaica and Mexico was "for precautionary tests – nothing was diagnosed".

A further story about Marley having had his head completely shaved so that electrodes could be attached to his scalp – a report which apparently originated from a Jamaican musician who'd flown into London after visiting Marley in New York – were not commented upon by Island. "We've heard the stories, too," said a spokesman.

MARLEY THE WARRIOR HASN'T LAIN DOWN HIS SWORD YET...

Meanwhile Marley has taken the unusual step of recording a message which was subsequently handed to US radio stations for broadcast. His message goes:

"Hail Rasta! You think anything can raas kill me? I understand that writers and people in the press are very interested and concerned about my health. I want to say thank you for your interest and that I'll be all right and I'll be back on the road again in 1981 – really, performing for the fans we love. Beautiful. Y'know, it's Bob talking to ya, have no doubt, seen? Good."

London's LBC Radio also broadcast an interview with Bob's wife Rita, who is in town to promote

her new solo album. "I saw Bob two weeks ago," she said, "and he was in pretty good spirits. He's just fatigued and exhausted. He's been working straight for the past seven to eight years without rest, and without proper diet, and it's just gotten to him. He's gone to Shashamane in Ethiopia to have some rest and further treatment for his exhaustion."

Would he be receiving special treatment in Ethiopia?

"Not really, just eating the best food he can and taking the good climate and adequate rest and not too much stress and pressures because he has been taking a lot of that from people... even in Jamaica a lot of stresses on him. He's gone to get some rest away from it all.

"He has musicians with him and I'll be joining him as soon as I leave London, to help keep off some of the intruders, because I think I'm the only person who can do that for him sometime, because he never say 'no' to an interview or a fan, and that's not too good for him now. He needs to be by himself. Y'know, there's a time in every man's life when they need to be isolated, to get into themselves, to recuperate and rejuvenate.

"We all have to pray and give thanks." 

NEIL SPENCER

CONFRONTATION

RELEASED 28 MAY 1983

Two years after his death, Marley's last testament is pieced together, after a fashion. "Mix up, Mix Up"! BY JOHN LEWIS

THESE are different varieties of posthumous album. There are those, like Gram Parsons' *Grievous Angel*, Janis Joplin's *Pearl* or Notorious B.I.G.'s *Life After Death*, that were pretty much finished and ready to go days before the artist died. There are others – like the Doors' *An American Prayer* or Queen's *Made In Heaven* – that were cobbled together from fragments and scraps of the singer's lead vocals, reanimated by the surviving bandmates. Then there are other posthumous releases – like Amy Winehouse's *Lioness* – which are effectively compilations, ragbags of rejected sessions that have been dredged from the vaults.

Confrontation – released in May 1983, exactly two years after Marley's death – is a mix of all three. There are songs, like "Buffalo Soldier", that were pretty much ready to go when Marley died; there are others, like "Jump Nyabingi" and "I Know", that were rescued from the Tuff Gong shelves; and there are tracks like "Mix Up, Mix Up", where fragments of Bob's vocals have been scrubbed, edited and overdubbed by the surviving Wailers.

Because of its confused provenance, some Marley aficionados treat *Confrontation* like an apocryphal book of the Bible; a blasphemous product that merely detracts from his legacy. It certainly has an absence of

quality control – where you'll barely find a duff track on any Wailers LP for most of the 1970s, *Confrontation*'s stronger moments are padded out with songs that would surely not have made the cut a few years earlier.

There is, however, a vague sense of unity to the product. Musically, the production – overseen by the surviving Wailers and Errol Brown, and exec-produced by Bob's widow Rita – was compressed to make it suitable for 1980s radio airplay, while the organ-like voices of the I Three were dubbed onto each track to create a sense of uniformity.

And thematically, even back in 1980, Marley had intended to name his next album *Confrontation*, the conclusion of a trilogy that started with *Survival* and continued with *Uprising*. The cover, by art director Neville Garrick, depicted Marley in a suitably bellicose role as St George (who is, incidentally, the patron saint of Ethiopia as well as a dozen other countries), atop a white stallion, slaying the dragon, wearing an Ethiopian-style toe stirrup that is presumably emblematic of the cancer that would start in his toe and later kill him. Garrick's original illustration had the dragon in a papal mitre – the Vatican being a much hated institution in Rastafari – but Chris Blackwell at Island Records vetoed this as being unnecessarily anti-Catholic. Open the gatefold sleeve and the belligerent theme is taken further with an artist's impression of the 1896 battle of Adwa, when Ethiopian forces shocked ➤

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS CONFRONTATION



**SOME SEE IT AS A
BLASPHEMOUS
PRODUCT THAT
MERELY DETRACTS
FROM THE LEGACY**

European colonial powers by defeating a fully tooled-up Italian army.

The concept of “confrontation” can have multiple meanings, and it is not entirely clear what the dominant one is on this album. Where *Survival* and *Uprising* are filled with insurrectionary anthems, the titular “confrontation” can be seen both as the final war itself – where the pure at heart engage in confrontation with the evil Babylon – or the reckoning that comes after this conflict. “Confrontation” in the latter context represents a resolution: after a holy war, we must all must “confront” the good and evil in our souls, as Marley claimed to have done while readying himself for death. “*Dem a go tired fe see me face*,” reads an inscription on the inner sleeve of the album. “*Can’t get me outta the race*.”

It speaks to a contradiction that is at the heart of Marley’s public persona – and perhaps also at the heart of Rastafari itself, a belief that makes much of the notion of “holy war”. Marley is both a peace-making saint and Rastafari’s warrior in chief, someone whose anthems of global togetherness and unity often come couched in warlike, sectarian metaphors.

This contradiction is certainly played out on the album’s lead single, “Buffalo Soldier”. Marley was fascinated to read about the ranks of African-Americans who were drafted into the US Army in the decades after Civil War, placed into all-black regiments and ordered – by white officers – to punish renegades among various Indian nations (Cheyenne, Sioux, Comanche, Apache) and to contribute to the Indians’ displacement and ethnic cleansing. The term “buffalo soldier” was, believes Marley, used by Native Americans to describe black servicemen with unkempt hair. It is a hymn to the conflicted sons of slaves (“*Stolen from Africa/brought to America*”) being forced to fight against another dispossessed people to “*win the war for America*”. The children of Africa are “*fighting for survival*”, even though it is plainly an unjust battle. Despite this, in the accompanying video that

CRITICS’ VERDICT

“Even though the album lacks that one great tune which creates a context for everything around it, it is still a record that no artist now living could have made.”

CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY, NME, MAY 14, 1983

“One of the sweetest, most overtly commercial records ever put out in Marley’s name. The politics is there, but it’s not threatening or dangerous, and is shrouded in production softness and remarkably tame Wailers.”

COLIN IRWIN, MELODY MAKER, MAY 14, 1983

Bob shot not long before his death, he and the Wailers – rather like The Clash before them – can’t help but look pretty damn cool in military uniforms.

It is the highlight of the album, and a song that was almost complete at the time of Marley’s death. It comes with a proper verse/chorus/middle eight structure that’s lacking from many other songs on *Confrontation*, and it would become the Wailers’ highest-charting single in the UK. The strong melody also comes with a wordless refrain, a descending phrase (“*Woy-yoy yoy!*”) that has been compared to the main riff in the theme tune to *The Banana Splits*. Marley’s estate claim that Bob would not have been aware of this tune as he left Delaware in 1967, a year before the show started its run on US television. This wouldn’t necessarily prevent a legitimate plagiarism suit, of course; besides, Marley would certainly have been based in London while the show was being aired on British television.

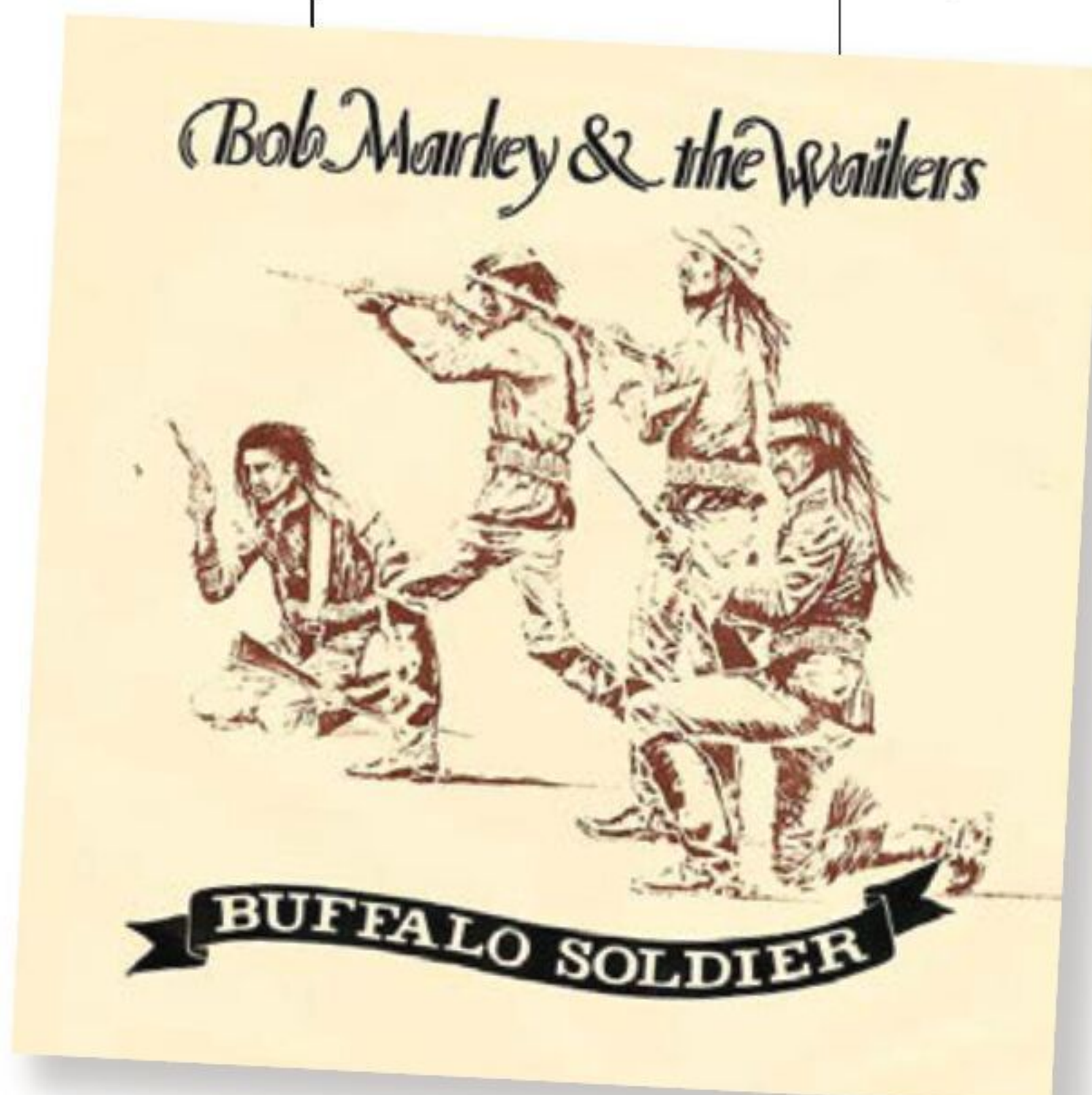
The contradictions of militancy versus serenity are marked on other tracks, one that is surprisingly serene in comparison to *Survival* or parts of *Uprising*. The opening track, “Chant Down Babylon”, is a less threatening version of a song originally demoed in 1980 as “Burn Down Babylon”. It bubbles and skanks agreeably, with a fine organ duel between Carlton Barrett and Earl Lindo, but it rather lacks the slow-motion doom of the original dub plate that you can find on YouTube: Aston “Family Man” Barrett’s syncopated, counter-melodic bassline on that original version has been replaced by a simpler, two-note sequence on *Confrontation*.

“Jump Nyabingi” – which dates back to the early 1977 sessions for *Exodus* and *Kaya* – is another pleasant piece of roots reggae with a lovely organ bubble and a smart horn riff. The militant references (“*Troddin’ down Jericho walls... Gonna trod till Babylon falls*”) are subsumed in a joyful celebration of dancing as a form of insurrection. Again, one gets the impression that, if Marley had taken this in for recording, he would have completed it,

inserting a chorus and bridge. As it is, it sounds a little incomplete – a problem that starts to become even more apparent with the later tracks in the running order.

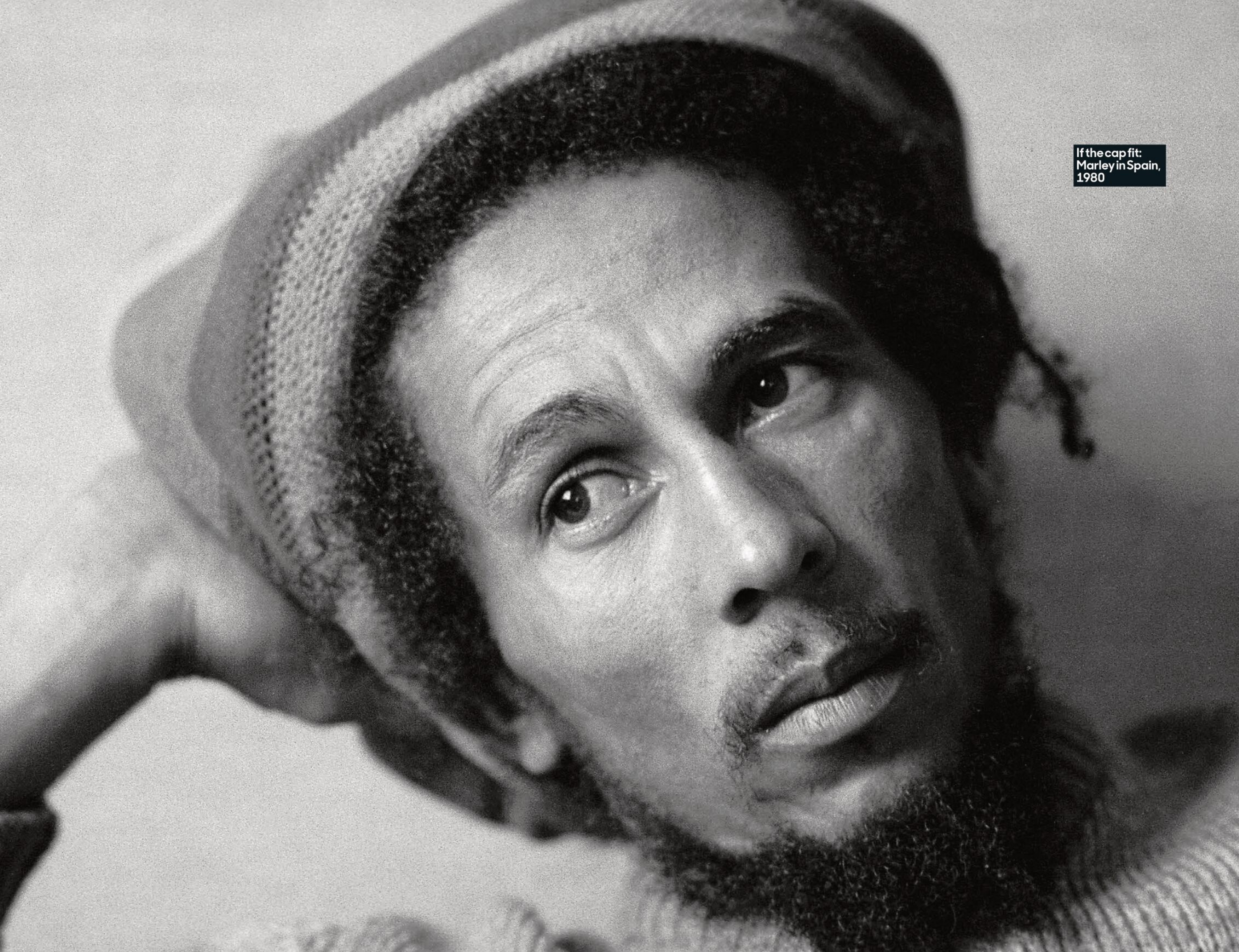
There’s a quiet, meditative feel to the sweet lovers’ rock skank “Give Thanks And Praises”. As well as being one of the most well-structured songs on the album, it is accompanied by lots of detailed keyboard work on at least four separate layers of guitar. The Barrett brothers don’t so much power home the grooves, more ease them out, gently. “I Know” is probably the oldest track on the album, dating back to the sessions for *Rastaman Vibration* in 1976, and is something of an outlier in the Marley catalogue. It’s one of his few excursions into disco and late-’70s soul music – alongside “Could You Be Loved”, “Turn The Lights Down Low” and a still unreleased but much bootlegged rarity called “Jungle Fever” – with a drumbeat that occasionally dips into reggae but tends to stay in a straight funk beat. The sunny major-sevenths and strings lines sound a little bit like a Style Council B-side, while the lyric – “*Ain’t it good to know/Jah will be waiting there*” – has the proselytising air of a charismatic Christian anthem. Unfortunately, a well structured song is marred by surprisingly cheap production; the synthesised strings sound dreadful, while the beats falter a little as they move between funk and reggae idioms.

Jamaican music would soon be in the throes of dancehall – a year after the release of *Confrontation* came Wayne Smith’s game-changing “Under Mi Sleng Teng”, based around the tinny, synthetic preset rhythm on a Casio MT-40. And there are moments on *Confrontation* that seem to prefigure the skeletal “riddims” that would dominate Jamaican dancehall. “Mix Up, Mix Up”, probably started during the sessions for 1978’s *Kaya*, is actually based on a very primitive two-track demo that featured Marley singing over a drumbox, improvising verses over the course of 25 minutes. Rita Marley discovered the tape in her own archives and presented it to Chris Blackwell, Family Man and Errol Brown to edit into shape. As the band cling to the metronomic drum box – overlaid with a percussive lead synth that recalls the Fatback Band’s “I Found Lovin’” – it initially sounds quite cheap but soon takes on a motoric, eerily futuristic vibe. Listen on headphones and you’ll hear a positively surreal layering of sound effects – hushed effects, breathy sounds from low-pitched organs, and ambient drones that sound like a series of controlled explosions.



TRACKMARKS CONFRONTATION

1 Chant Down Babylon ★★★	8 Stiff Necked Fools ★★★	(lead vocals, bk vocal, rhythm guitar), Aston Barrett (bass, guitar, percussion), Carlton Barrett (drums, akete), Tyrone Downie (keyboards, bk vocal), Junior Marvin (lead guitar, bk vocal), Earl Lindo (keyboards), Alvin Patterson (percussion), the I Three (Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt) (bk vocals), Glen DaCosta (tenor saxophone), David Madden (trumpet), Ronald 'Nambo' Robinson (trombone), Devon Evans (percussion), Carlton 'Santa' Davis (drums on "Chant Down Babylon")
2 Buffalo Soldier ★★★★★	9 I Know ★★★	Highest chart position: UK 5, US 55
3 Jump Nyabingi ★★★	10 Rastaman Live Up! ★★	
4 Mix Up, Mix Up ★★★	Label: Tuff Gong/Island	
5 Give Thanks & Praises ★★★	Produced by: Bob Marley & The Wailers, Errol Brown, Rita Marley	
6 Blackman Redemption ★★	Recorded at: Tuff Gong Studios, Kingston	
7 Trench Town ★★	Personnel: Bob Marley	



If the cap fit:
Marley in Spain,
1980

That snaking, buzzsaw synth/organ sound also re-emerges in “Stiff Necked Fools”, which – shorn of horns, vocal harmonies and with little guitar grandstanding – also seems to project towards the digital dancehall era. Ironically, the lyrics are the oldest on this album, with most of its lines (“*Destruction of the poor is poverty/Destruction of the soul is vanity*”) recycled from a late 1960s piece of funkyska that the Wailers recorded as “Wisdom” (Peter Tosh also recycled the same lyrics on “Fools Die”, from his 1981 album, *Wanted Dread & Alive*). Oddly, as Marley lays into the “*stiff-necked fools*” of Jamaica’s ruling caste, the mood is not so much that of righteous anger, more one of resigned sadness. “*I don’t wanna fool ya/I don’t wanna school ya/Things you might never know about.*” The Wailers also demoed a version of this song in 1979, with a growling, distorted Farfisa organ carrying the synth line and Carlton Barrett’s rimshots shrouded in echo. Like other demos, it’s probably better than the album version.

Another song that exists as an earlier demo is “Blackman Redemption”, a track Marley recorded at the Dynamic and Aquarius studios with Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry in around 1978. The simple two-chord song works better in Scratch’s original

IT LACKS THE BLOOD- AND-THUNDER VIBE WE MIGHT EXPECT FROM SUCH A TITLE

production – which features backing vocals from the Meditations rather than the I Three, clattering nyabinghi percussion, and some huge, flared reverb on the snare drum. These have a sonic excitement that’s lacking from the rather smooth *Confrontation* version, which adds a different horn hook and some percussive clavinet work.

With other tracks, there is certainly a sense of detail in the production and the mixing – there are syncopated guitar flourishes and rhythmic quirks that have been added after many weeks and months in the studio – but one gets the impression that many of these songs would have been seriously reworked had Marley taken them into the studio for album release. The closing track “Rastaman Live Up” is a below-par three-chord tune that cycles

endlessly, with no differentiation between verse and chorus – the only reason for its inclusion seems to be the references to biblical slayings (“*David slew Goliath with a sling and a stone/Samson slew the Philistines with a donkey jawbone*”) that echo the cover image. Likewise the four-chord sequence of “Jump Nyabinghi” or the rudimentary two-chord repetition of “Blackman Redemption”. And even a smartly harmonised horn riff can’t save the slightly dull “Trench Town”, for all its celebrations of “*we free the people with music*”.

But it’s not just the incomplete nature of half of these tracks that disappoints. The other thing that seems to be missing is the anger and bile that pervades Marley’s most strident work. The writer Ian MacDonald identifies an “uncompromising politico-religious outlaw message” in Marley’s music that was both proselytising and – with his talk of “bombing a church”, wiping out the “weakheart conception” and his contempt for “crazy baldheads” – troublingly sectarian. *Confrontation* lacks the blood-and-thunder holy-warrior vibe we might expect from an album with such an incendiary title. The sweet, soulful, saintly Bob Marley can sound fine when he’s speaking softly, but he was even better when he carried a big stick. 🗡️

LIVES & COMPILATIONS

RELEASED 1973-2015

How a legend became *Legend*. The collected Bob Marley.

BY PETER WATTS

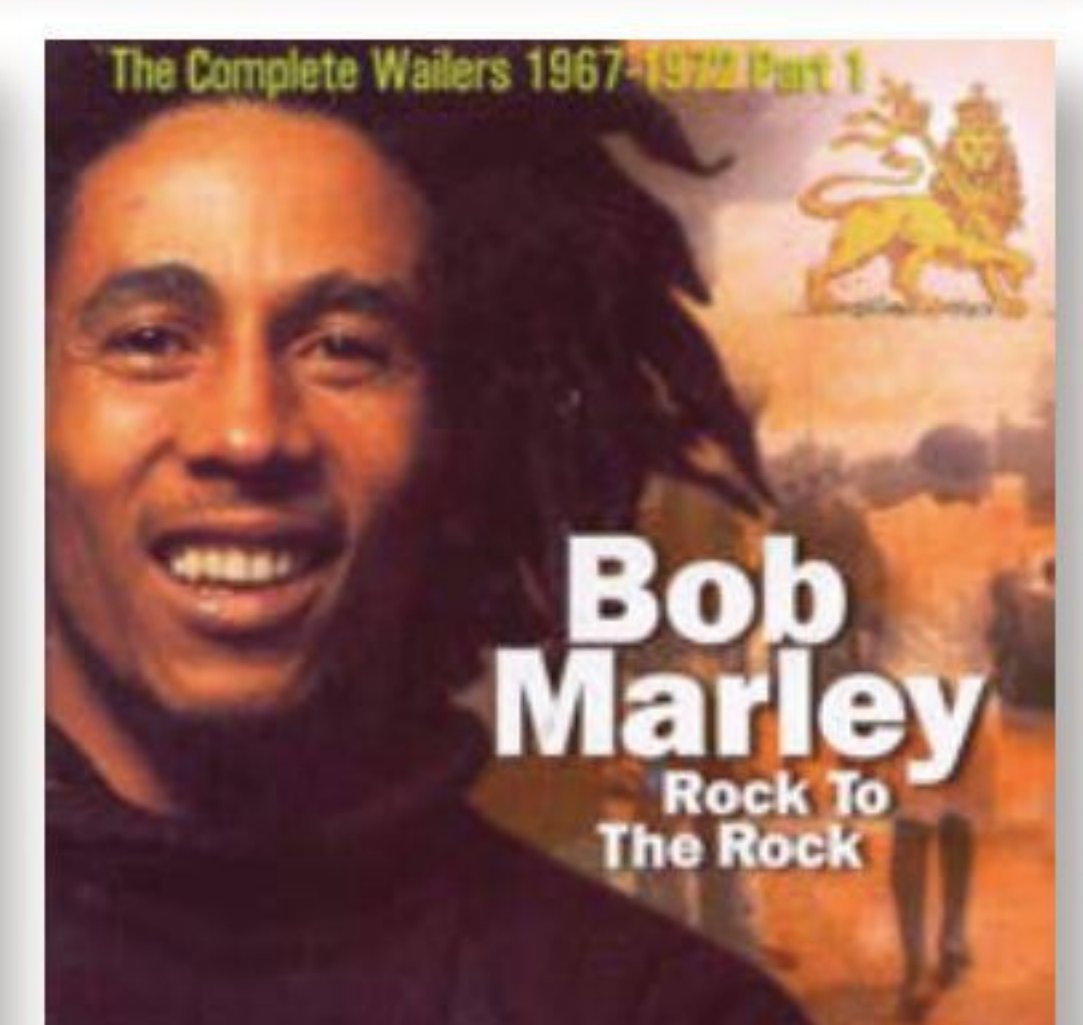
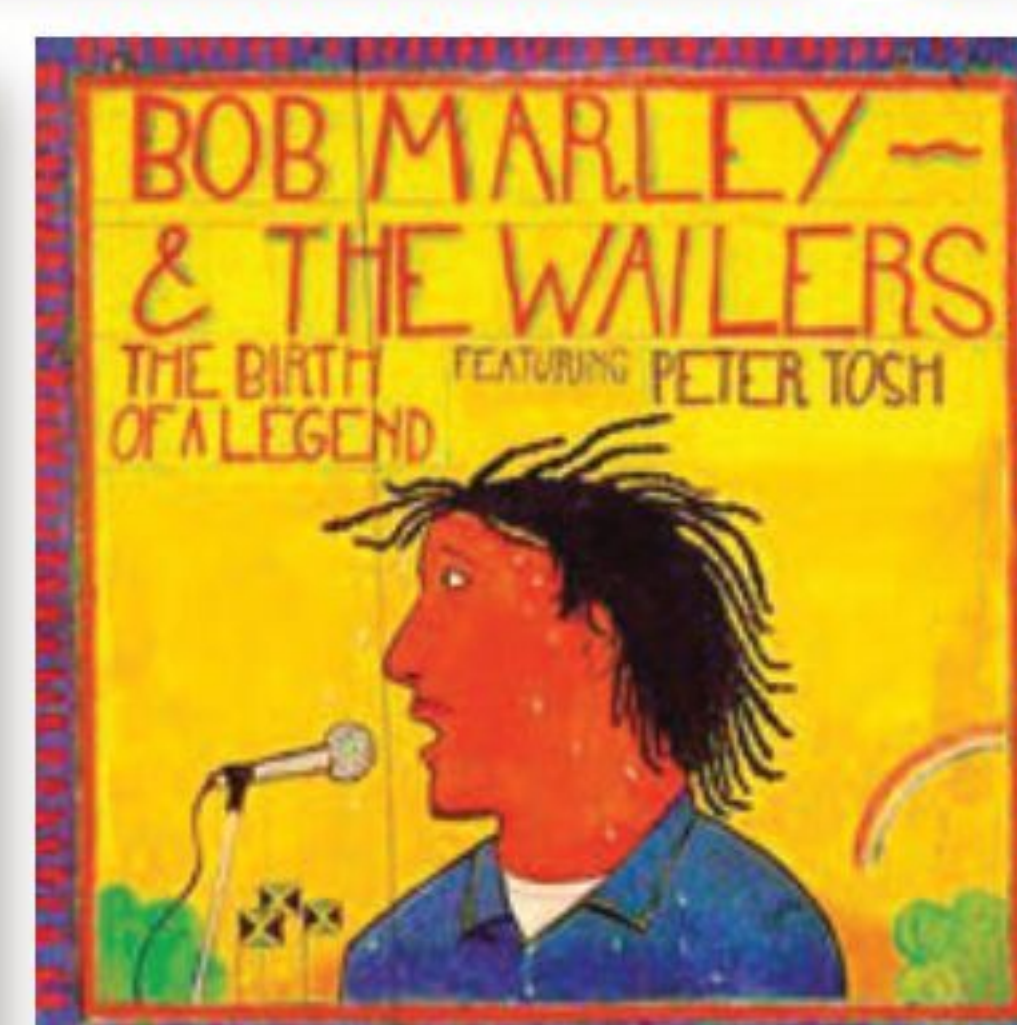
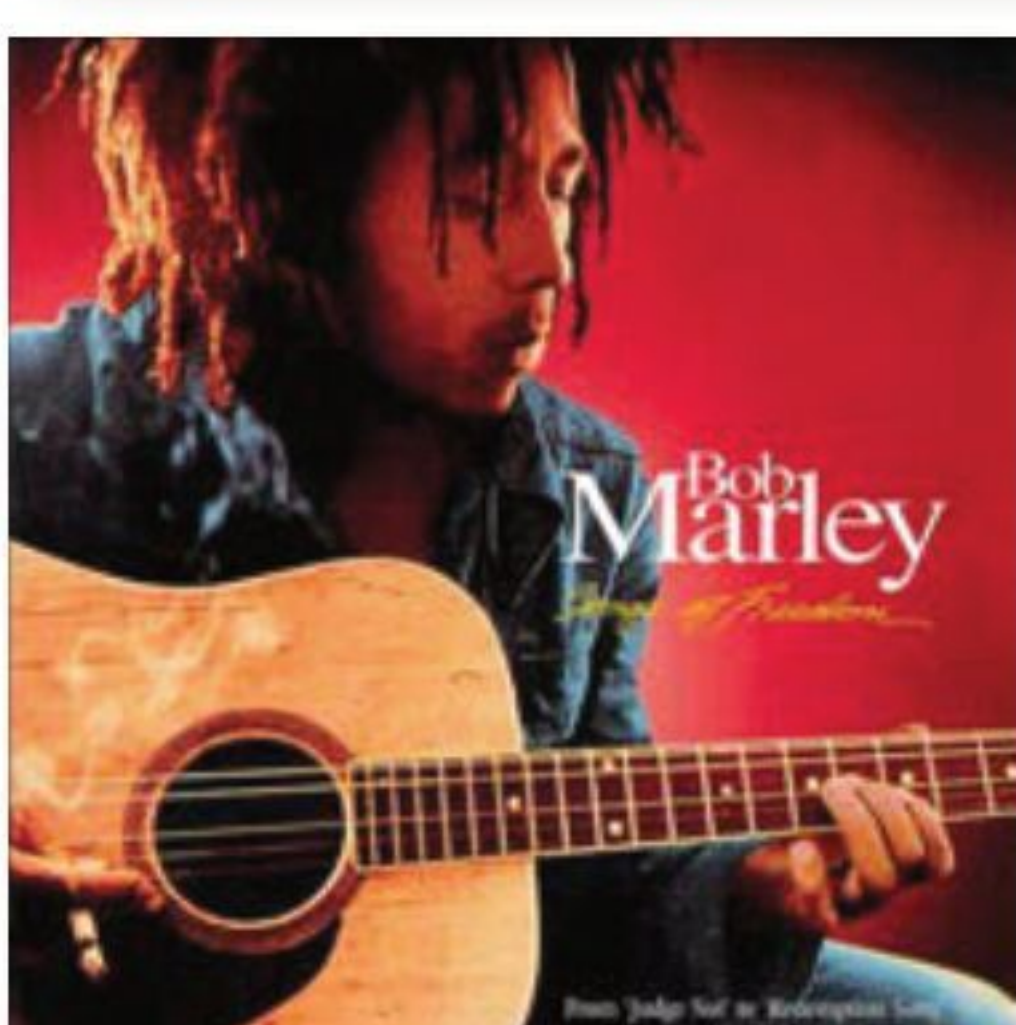
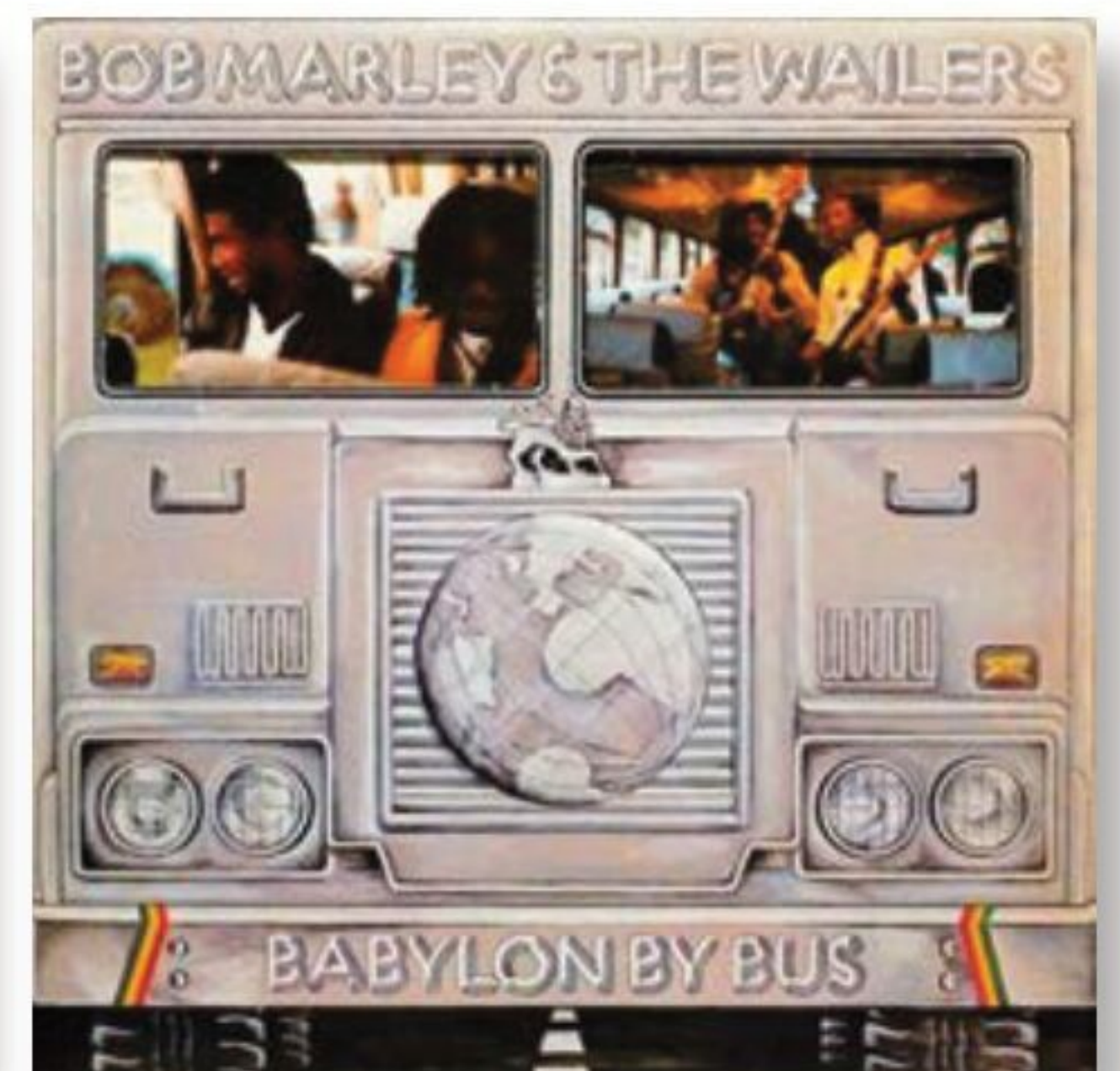
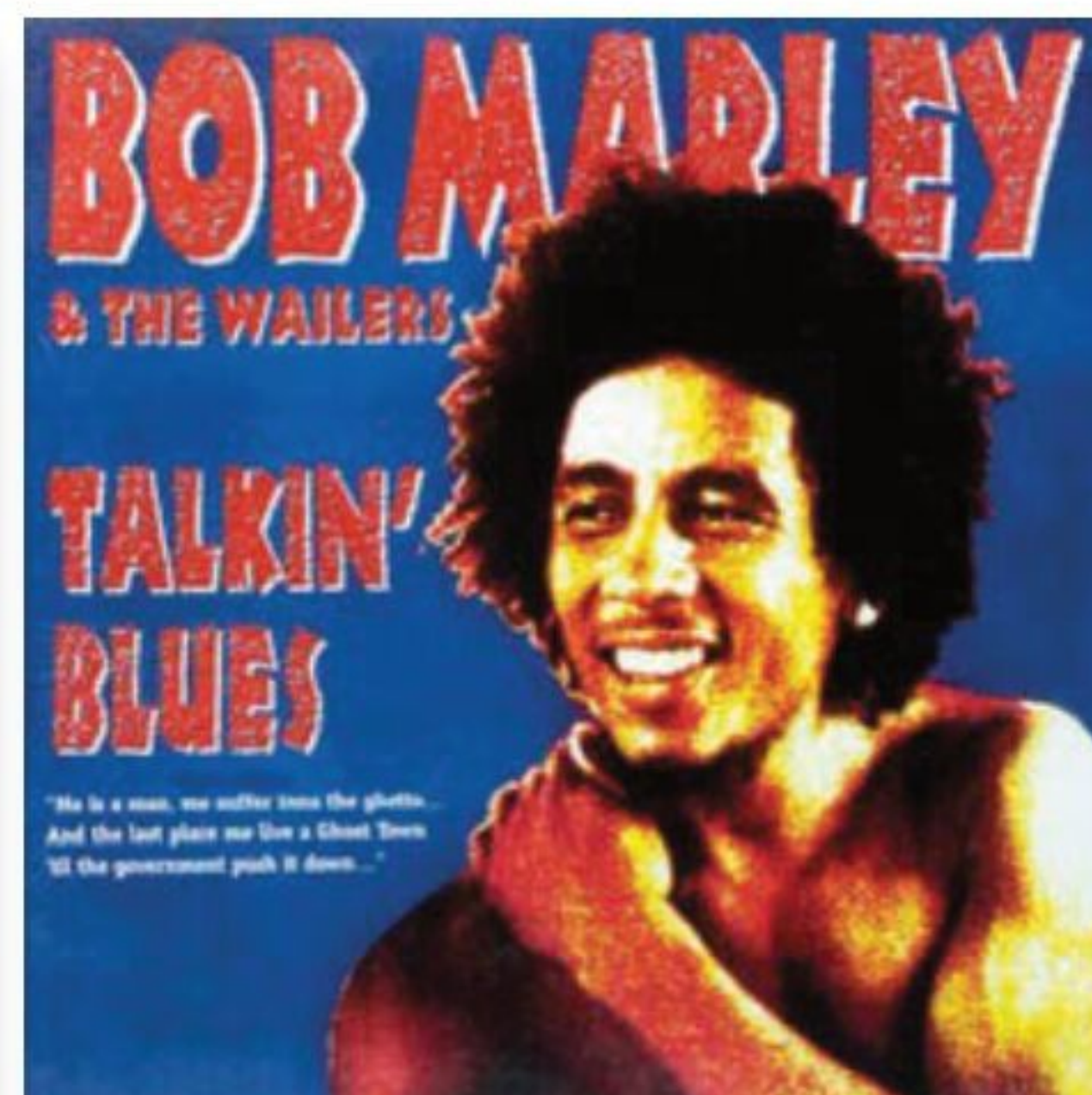
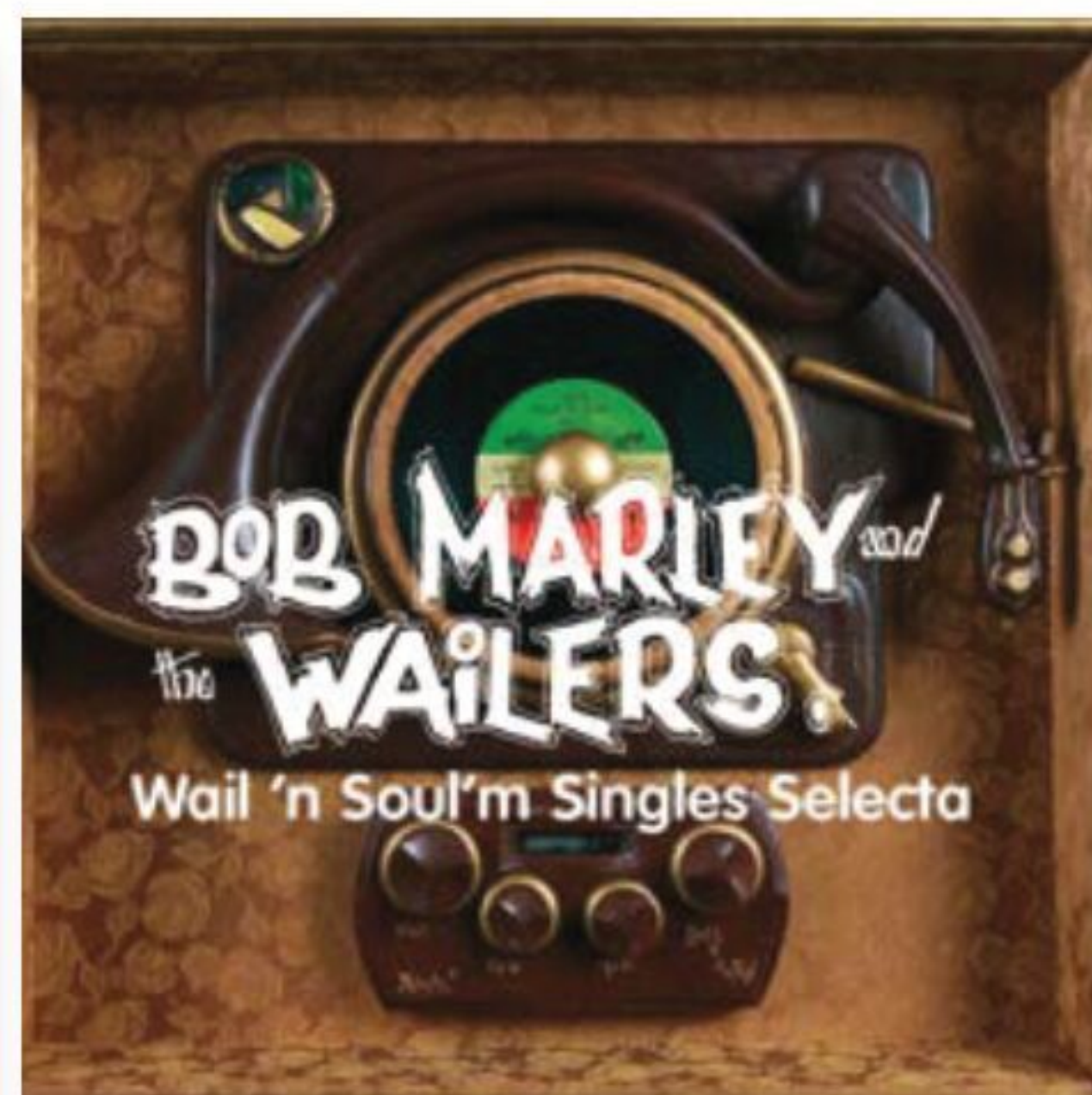
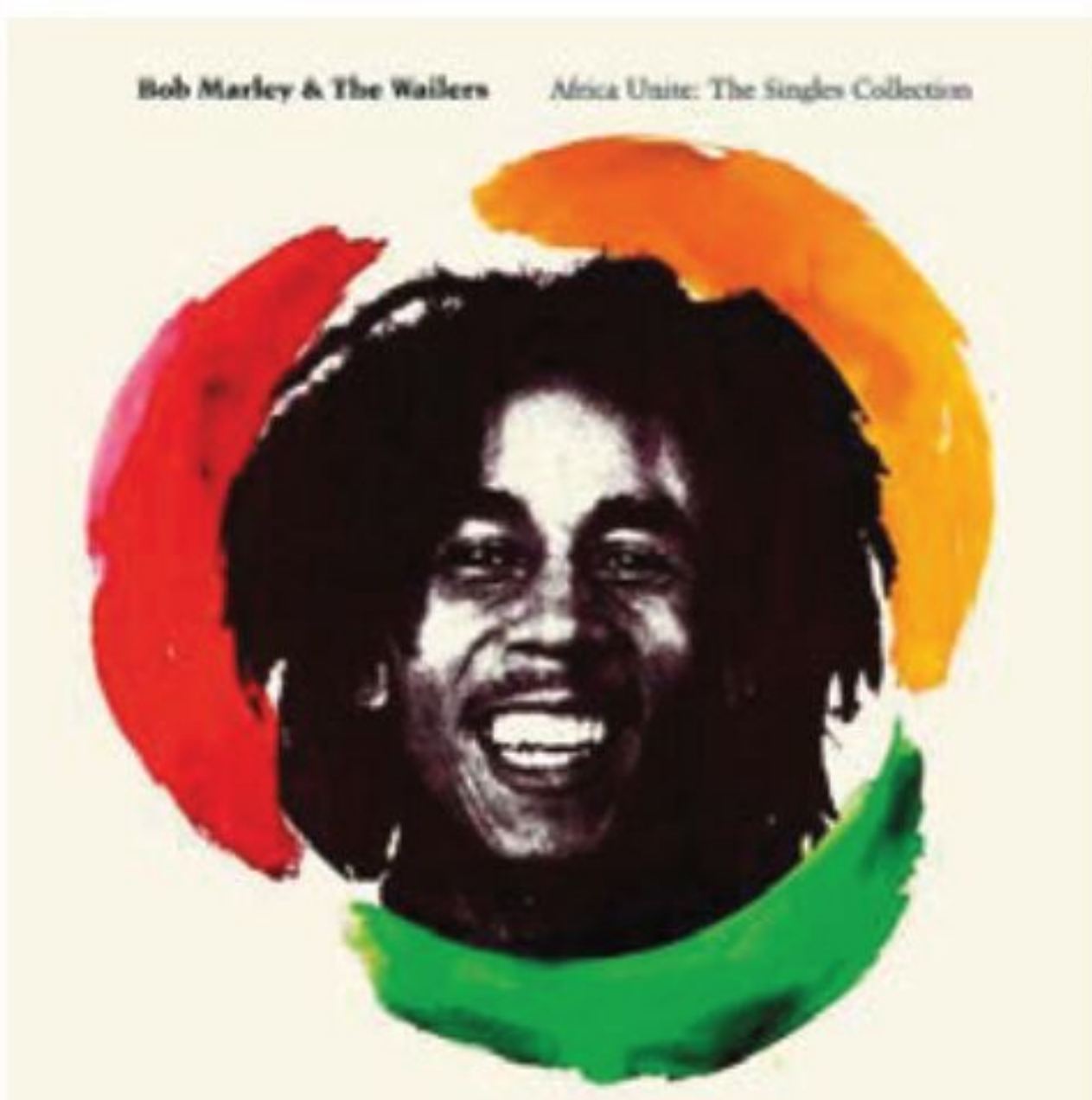
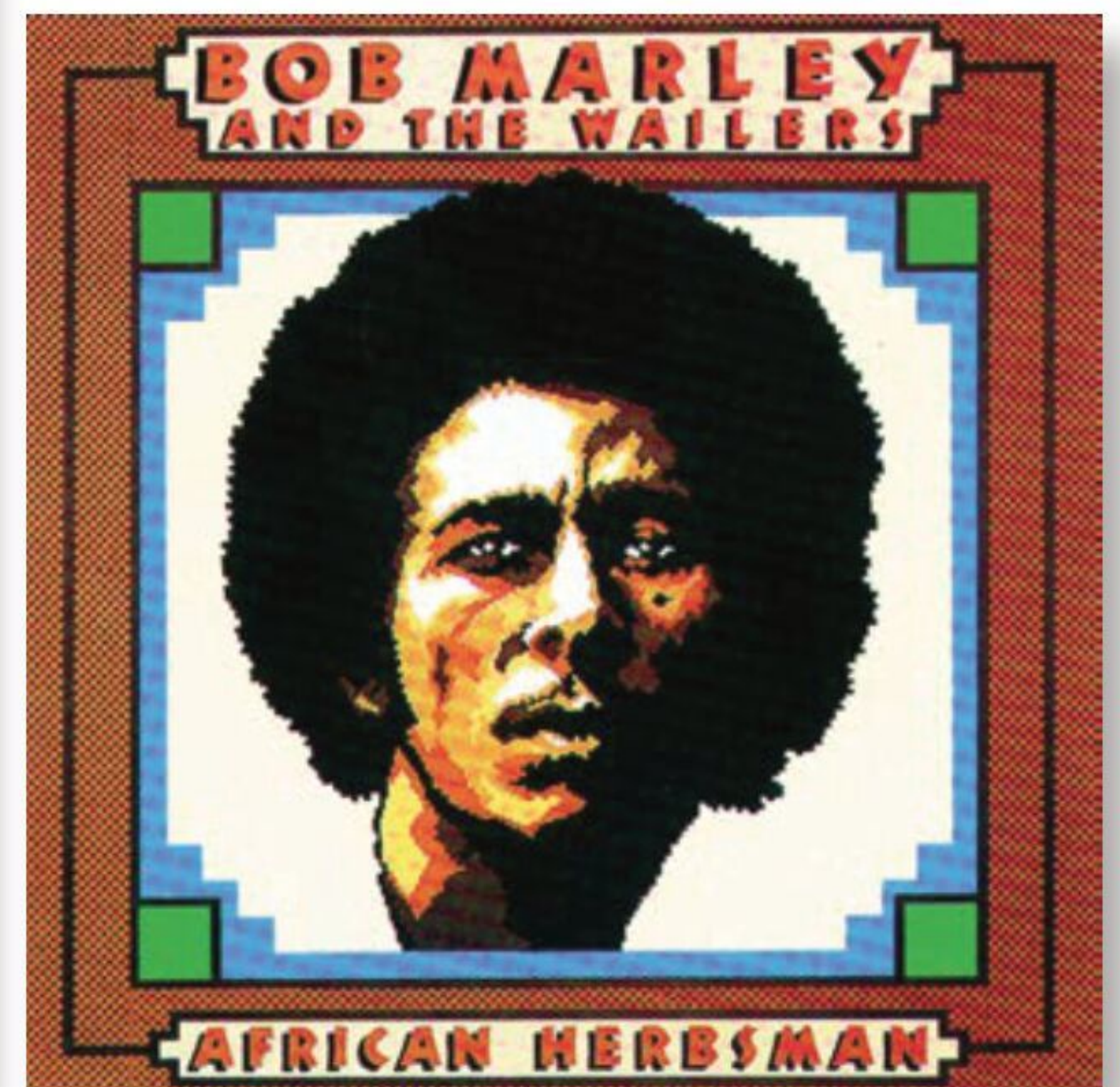
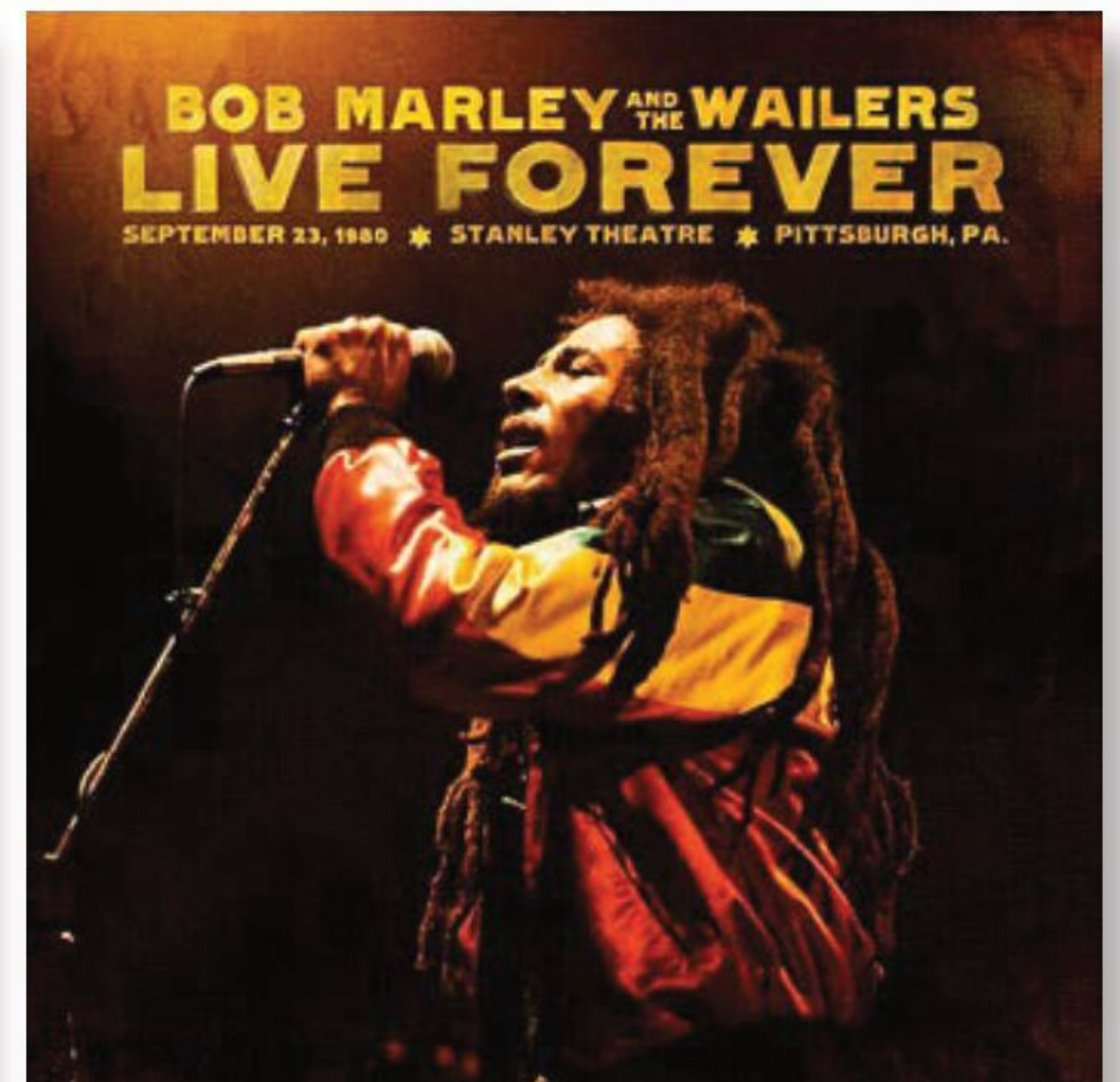
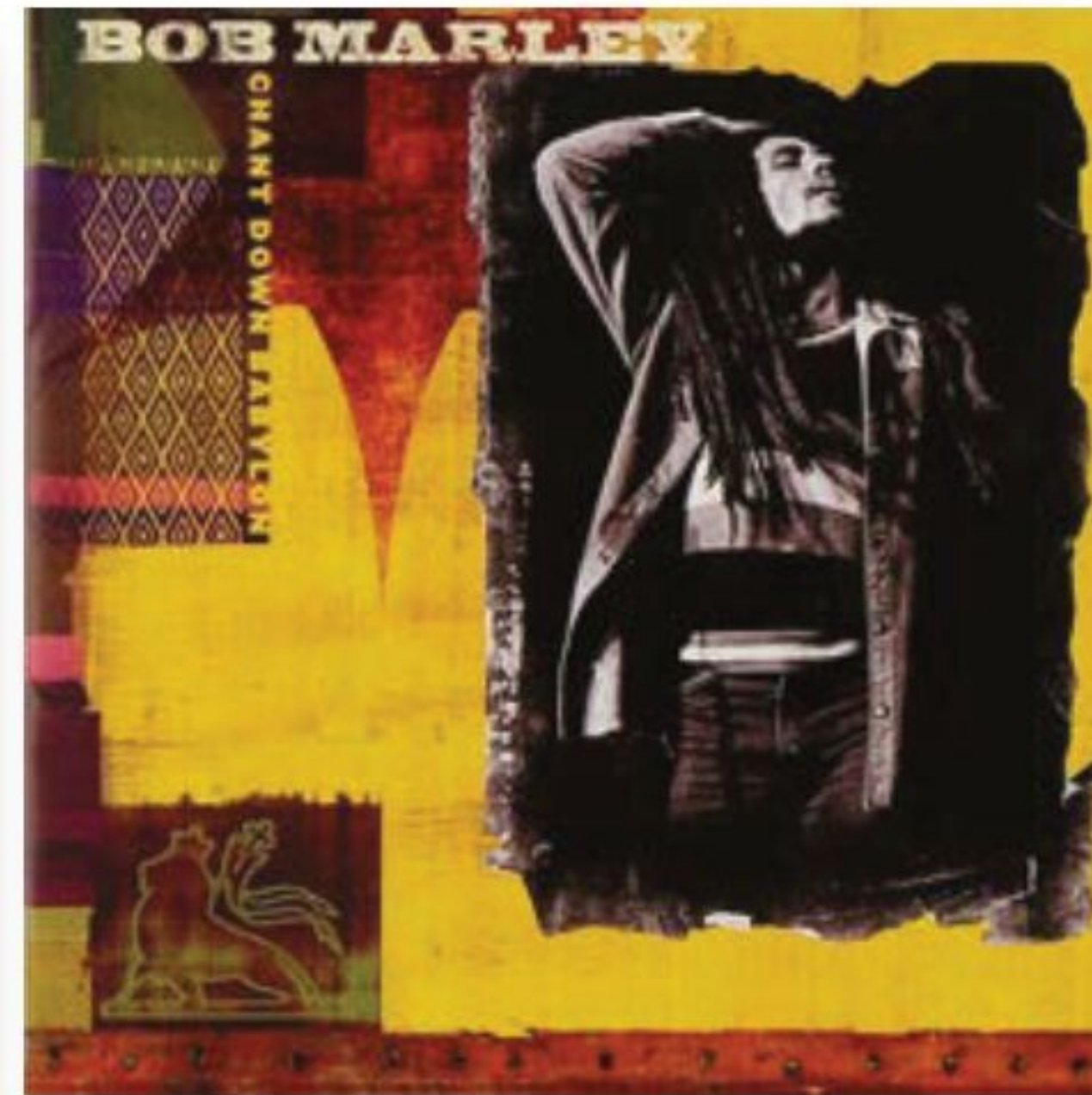
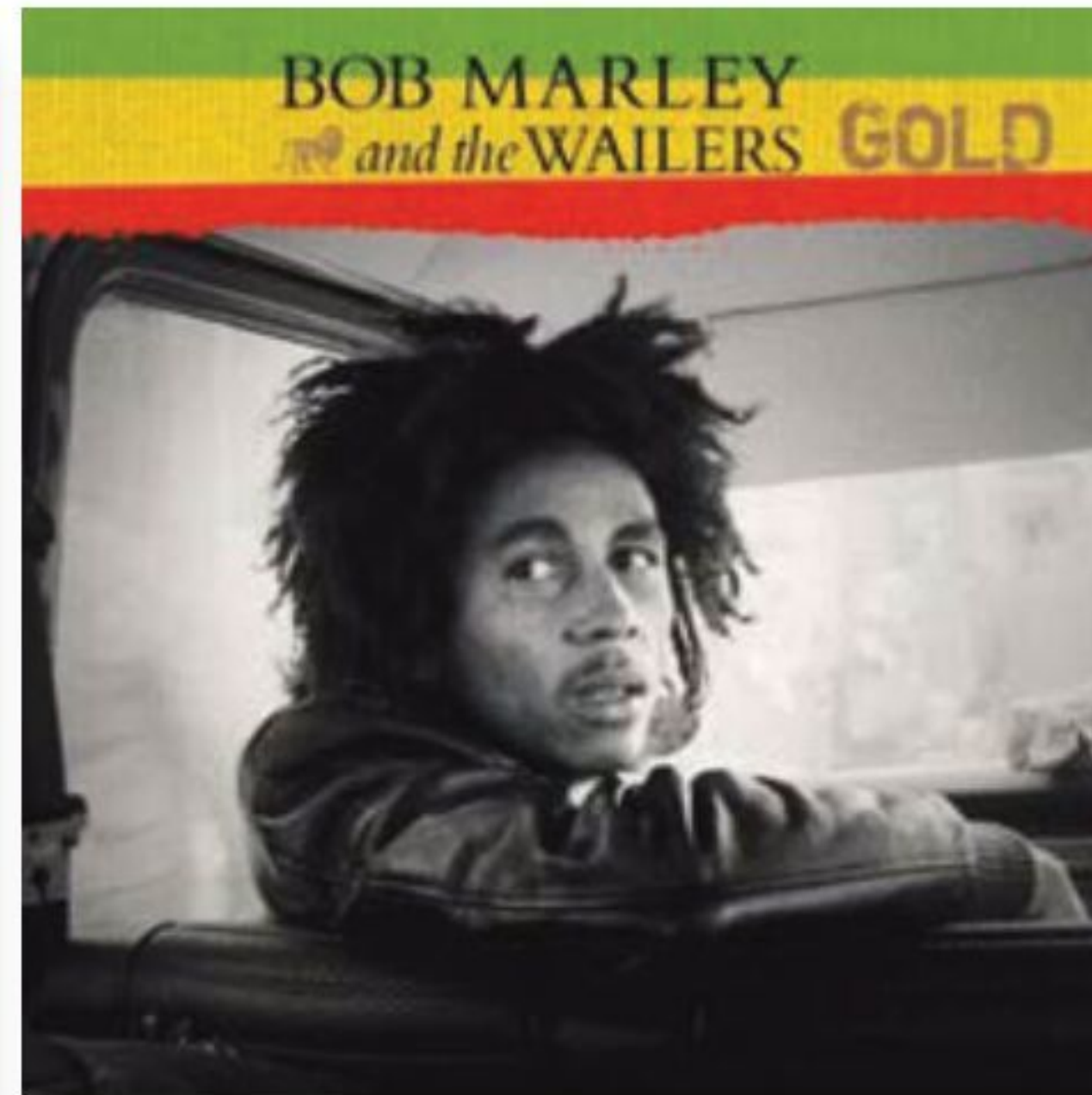
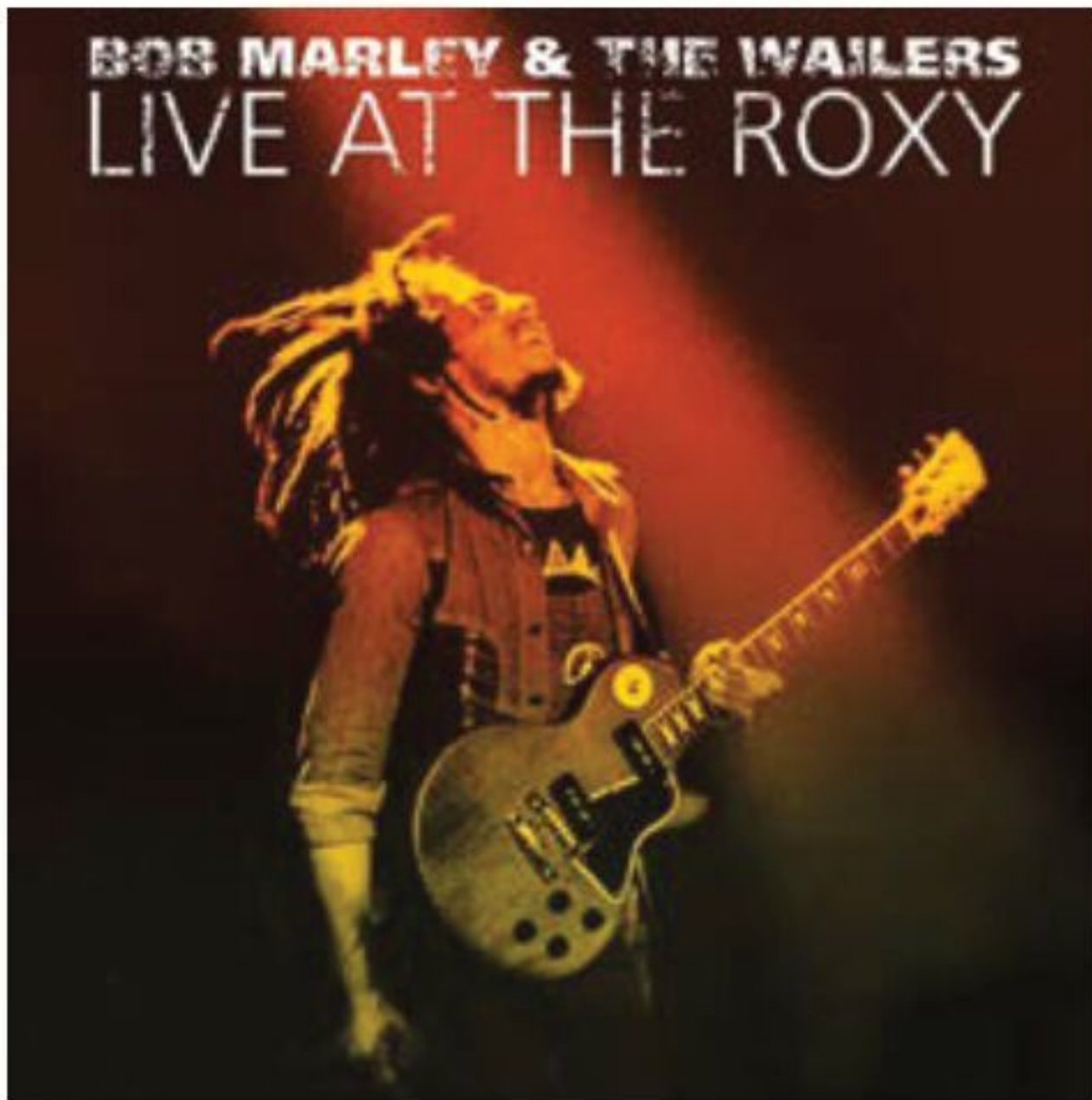
HERE'S only one place to start. **Legend** ★★★★★ is an album that occupies a position in the Marley canon arguably more prominent than *Exodus* itself. It is one of a handful of compilation albums that are of serious cultural importance, musical landmarks in terms of sales and reach rather than for the creativity of their contents. But there's a difference. Most of the world's best-selling compilations – Queen's *Greatest Hits*, Eagles' *Their Greatest Hits*, *The Immaculate Collection*, Abba's *Gold*, Beatles' *No 1* – are by artists who were already international heavyweights; *Legend*, by contrast, is the album that truly established Marley's place in the canon, turning the cheeky ambition of the title into hard fact.

Just parse those numbers. Since 1984, *Legend* has since sold between 20 and 30 million copies worldwide, spending 465 weeks in the *Billboard* 200 chart and still selling at a rate of 5,000 copies each week in the US alone. The album's status is such that in 2002 it was reissued in a deluxe edition with a couple of bonus tracks and a second CD of remixes. In 2013 came another remixed version – the remix album is a Marley back catalogue staple – while a 2014 30th anniversary reissue cashed in on the 180g vinyl fad, also offering the album in rasta colours.

For some, *Legend* is not just the only Bob Marley album they've ever heard of, it's the only reggae LP they will ever own. For others it's the gateway into not just Marley's catalogue or the previously unfamiliar genre of reggae, but into an entire philosophy, as well as a different culture and history. In this context, whether it's any good is almost immaterial. *Legend* takes 10 Top 40 singles plus "Stir It Up", "I Shot The Sheriff" and "Get Up, Stand Up", along with "Redemption Song". The 2002 edition adds "Easy Skanking" and "Punky Reggae Party", both of which had featured on the initial cassette version in 1984.

Compiled by Stiff co-founder Dave Robinson, *Legend* was intended as a million-seller for an artist whose sales were good but by no means extraordinary. Robinson knew that to do this he had to reach beyond traditional fans of reggae – students and the black diaspora. "My vision of Bob from a marketing point of view," Robinson has said, "was to sell him to the white world." To find out what the white world wanted, Robinson commissioned focus groups, talking to white suburban music fans as well as Marley enthusiasts, discussing Marley's image and playing various versions of the album before settling on a final tracklist that satisfied both audiences. He found that while many white fans loved the music, they balked at the focus on pot, patois and politics.

To break this barrier, the Marley message was ➤

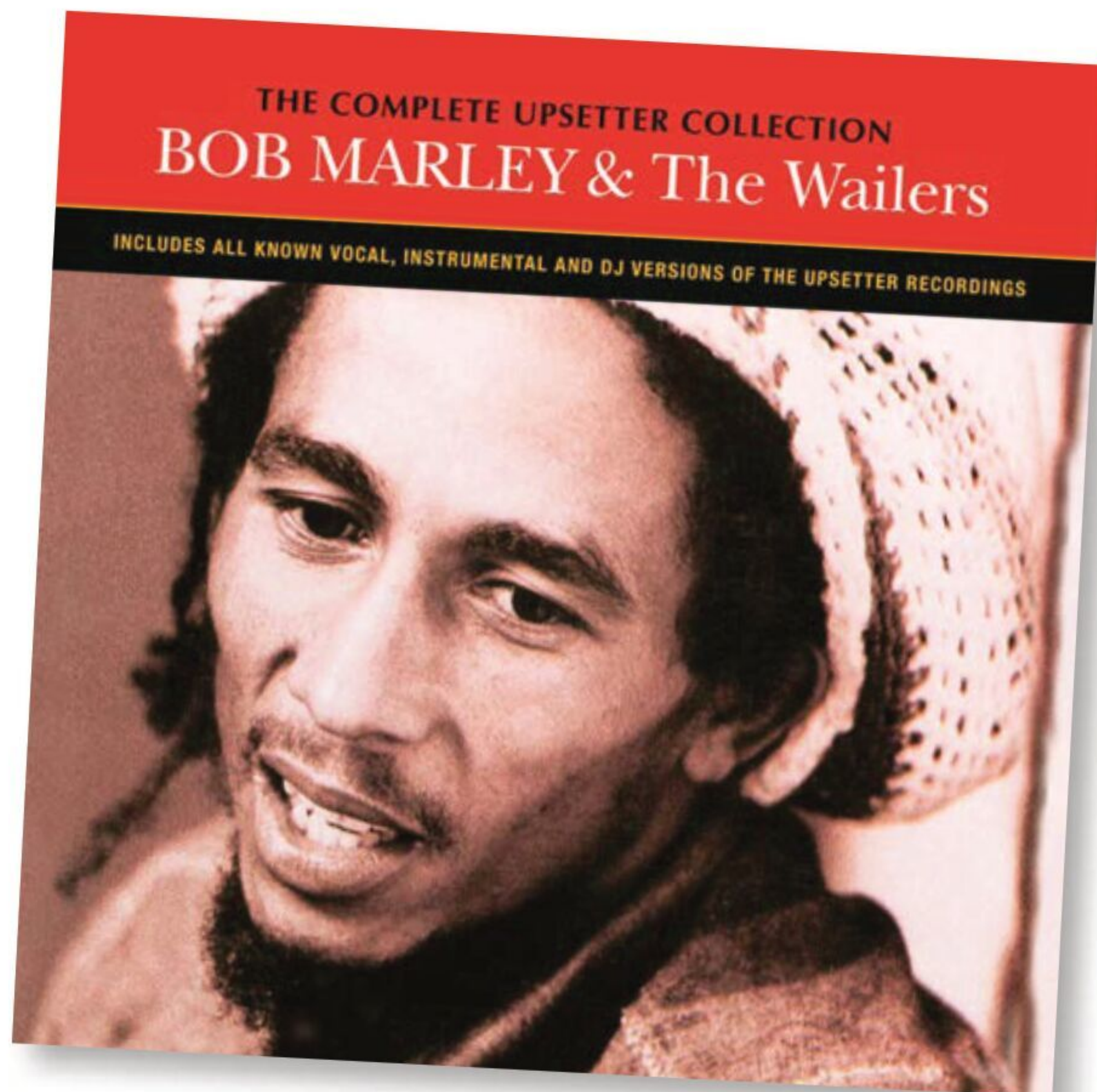


rigorously soft-soaped. Rastafarianism was recast as a sort of New Age spiritualism, and the gentler Marley of *Kaya* was foregrounded – it was no mistake that “Is This Love” was the opening track. The songs weren’t completely apolitical – “Buffalo Soldier”, “Redemption Song” and “Exodus” are all present – but they were far from belligerent, offering a Marley who was politically engaged but not frightening. Robinson selected a cover image where Marley was looking thoughtful rather than defiant and even insisted that the word “reggae” didn’t appear in any of the marketing. You could argue this was the logical conclusion of the entire Island approach, or you could say it was a complete perversion of Blackwell’s desire to bring reggae to the west, but you couldn’t deny it was effective.

Legend sanitises the politics and, bar “Stir It Up”, ignores the first decade of Marley’s career, but that’s why it works. Effectively condensing complexity is a tough task and *Legend* offers ease of listening in the least pejorative sense; beautiful, consistent and deceptively simple pop songs that have become as familiar as breathing even if you’ve never knowingly played the album. These are the songs that allowed Marley to cross over in the first place, and they capture a quality of his music and character that for many people is all they feel they need to understand the man.

In fact, the only problem with *Legend* is that it does such a fine job of re-editing Marley for a mass audience it left the label with almost nowhere else to go. That didn’t stop it trying, and several compilations attempt to footnote or better *Legend*, while others take on the no less onerous task of unpicking the confusion of his early career. First out the block after *Legend* was 1986’s **Rebel Music** ★★★★★, highlighting 10 heavily political songs from the Island years. The only overlap with *Legend* is “Get Up, Stand Up”, albeit this time the version from *Live!*, and there’s also room for 1977 B-side “Roots” as well as a remix of “Rebel Music” to entice established fans. The message comes over clear, particularly on the impassioned “War/No More Trouble” medley. In its entirety, it offers a neat package for those seeking a hipper alternative to *Legend*, but sales didn’t come close to matching the numbers for the former. A 2002 remastered reissue added “Wake Up And Live” from *Survival*.

The perennial popularity of *Legend* meant Island/Tuff didn’t try again until 1995, deep into the CD age. **Natural Mystic: The Legend Lives On** ★★★★★ was a less in-your-face version of *Rebel Music* featuring album tracks that are largely of a political sensibility but not quite as angry, instead focusing on a one-love philosophy. The songs are great, including a cheery live take on “Trenchtown Rock” from the

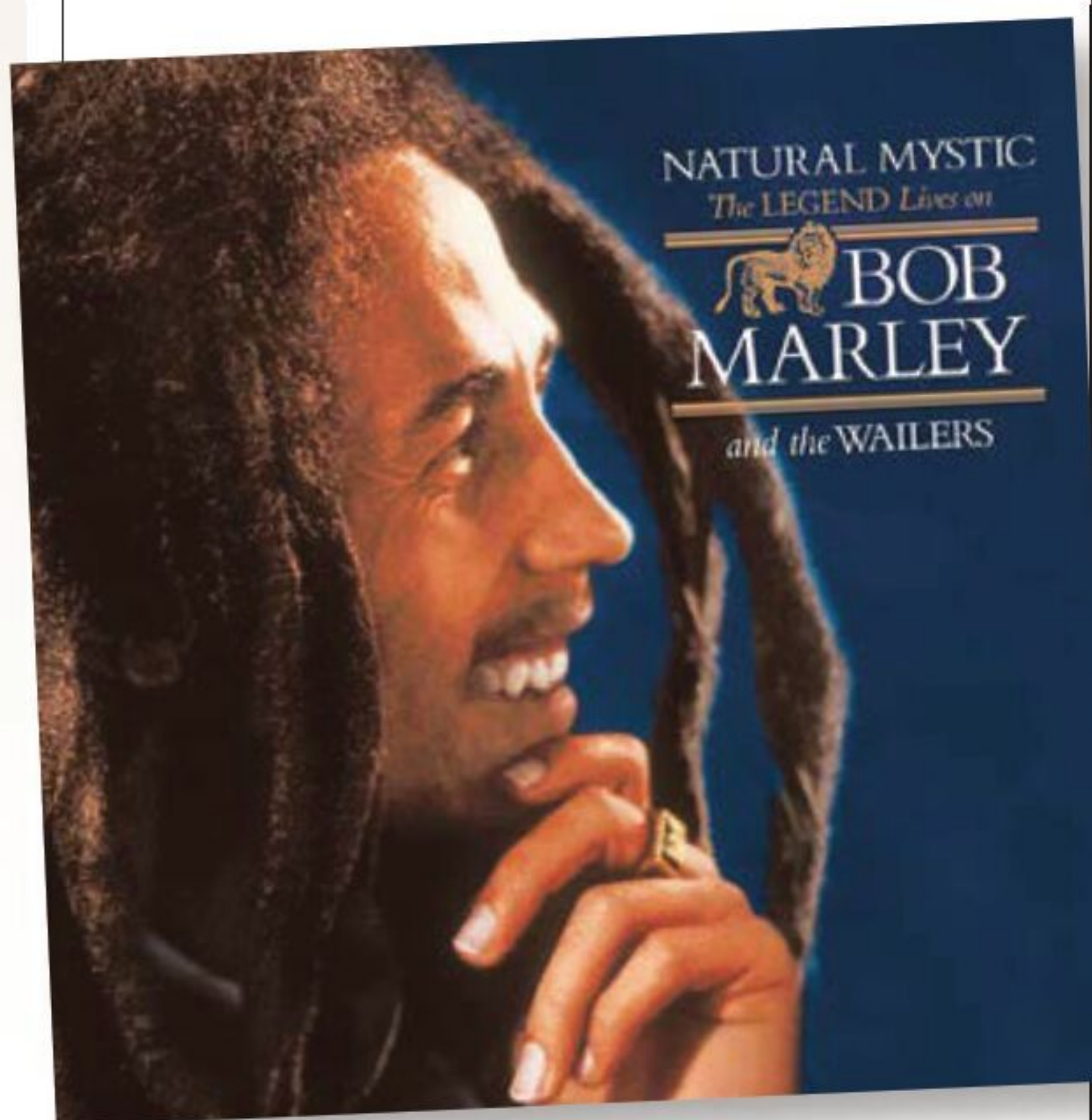


CRITICS' VERDICT

“Legend turns out to be very much a best of Bob while scarcely doing justice to Marley’s Wailers. The international scores which sustained his belated breakthrough are more than the backbone of the record, they make up most of the flesh, too, and it runs uncomfortably close to flab.”
RICHARD COOK ON LEGEND, NME MAY 12, 1984

Lyceum in 1975 and a likeable remix of “Iron Lion Zion”, but the concept is wishy-washy. A 2002 reissue added “Positive Vibration”.

By 2001, Island felt it could offer a genuine alternative to *Legend* rather than half-hearted addenda and brought out the 33-track **One Love: The Very Best Of Bob Marley & The Wailers** ★★★★★, which replicated *Legend* while adding plenty more besides, including a few remixes and alternative versions. **Gold** ★★★★★ then came out in 2005 doing almost exactly the same thing – the tracklisting is practically identical – but in chronological order and with at least two tracks from every album, albeit from the starting point of *Catch A Fire*. That same year, Island produced a singles comp, **Africa Unite: The Singles Collection** ★★★★★, which kicked off with “Soul Rebel” from 1970 and concluded with a couple of remixes by will.i.am (“Africa Unite”) and Ashley Beedle (“Stand Up Jamrock”) plus “Slogans”, a 1980 home



LEGEND HANGS OVER MARLEY'S COMPILATION CATALOGUE

recording to which Eric Clapton now added guitar. Throughout all these albums, *Legend* looms large, lending a sense of pointlessness to these endeavours. Why compete with perfection?

For those attempting to explore the swamp of pre-Island comps, 1977’s **Birth Of A Legend** ★★★★★ is a nice set covering the mid-’60s Wailing Wailers era, 1973’s **African Herbsman** ★★★★★ is an atmospheric mishmash of tracks from *Soul Revolution*, *Soul Rebels* and related singles that came out on Trojan, while **Wail’N Soul’M Singles Selecta** ★★★★★ is a brilliant – albeit not definitive – round-up of the Wailers’ rocksteady singles. **One Love At Studio One: 1964-1966** ★★★★★ is an equally great collection of 40 ska, R&B and gospel sides, while for serious fans there’s **The Complete Bob Marley & The Wailers 1967-1972** ★★★★★, which pulled together 220-tracks over 11 volumes. If that seems a little much, **The Complete Upsetter Collection** ★★★★★ has the Lee Perry material on a still daunting but slightly less damaging six discs.

As far as career-encompassing sets go, your only choice is 1992’s four-disc **Songs Of Freedom** ★★★★★, which starts in 1961 and covers Marley’s entire life using a mix of album tracks, outtakes, singles and live versions. It’s interesting, but far from definitive. On top of this, there’s a small stack of remix albums, the best of which is probably 1999’s **Chant Down Babylon** ★★★★★, featuring Erykah Badu, Rakim, Lauryn Hill, Chuck D and, er, Aerosmith.

MUCH as *Legend* hangs over Marley’s compilation catalogue, **Live!** (reviewed at length on page 56) threatens to do the same to his live recordings. How do you compete with one of the finest live albums of all? Fortunately, live music offers a different range of opportunities to the static world of studio recordings, where the compiler is effectively rifling through a limited stock and trying to put them together in the right, or at least a different, order. Concerts, even on the same tour, all vary to a lesser or greater extent, while numerous factors – from atmosphere and editing to backing musicians and recording conditions – play into the final feel. So **Babylon By Bus** ★★★★★ is very nearly as good as *Live!*. This double album from 1978 was recorded largely (though not entirely) in Paris during the *Kaya* tour. Early highlights include “Punky Reggae Party” and “Exodus”, but the album really gets going with the medley of “War/No More Trouble” and a majestic “Heathen”, with awesome guitar from Junior Marvin.

It’s questionable whether 1991’s **Talkin’ Blues** ★★★★★ qualifies as a genuine live album given its hotchpotch make-up, but it’s one of the better supplementary Marley albums you can get. The spine is formed by

Live at
London's
Rainbow
Theatre,
June 3, 1977

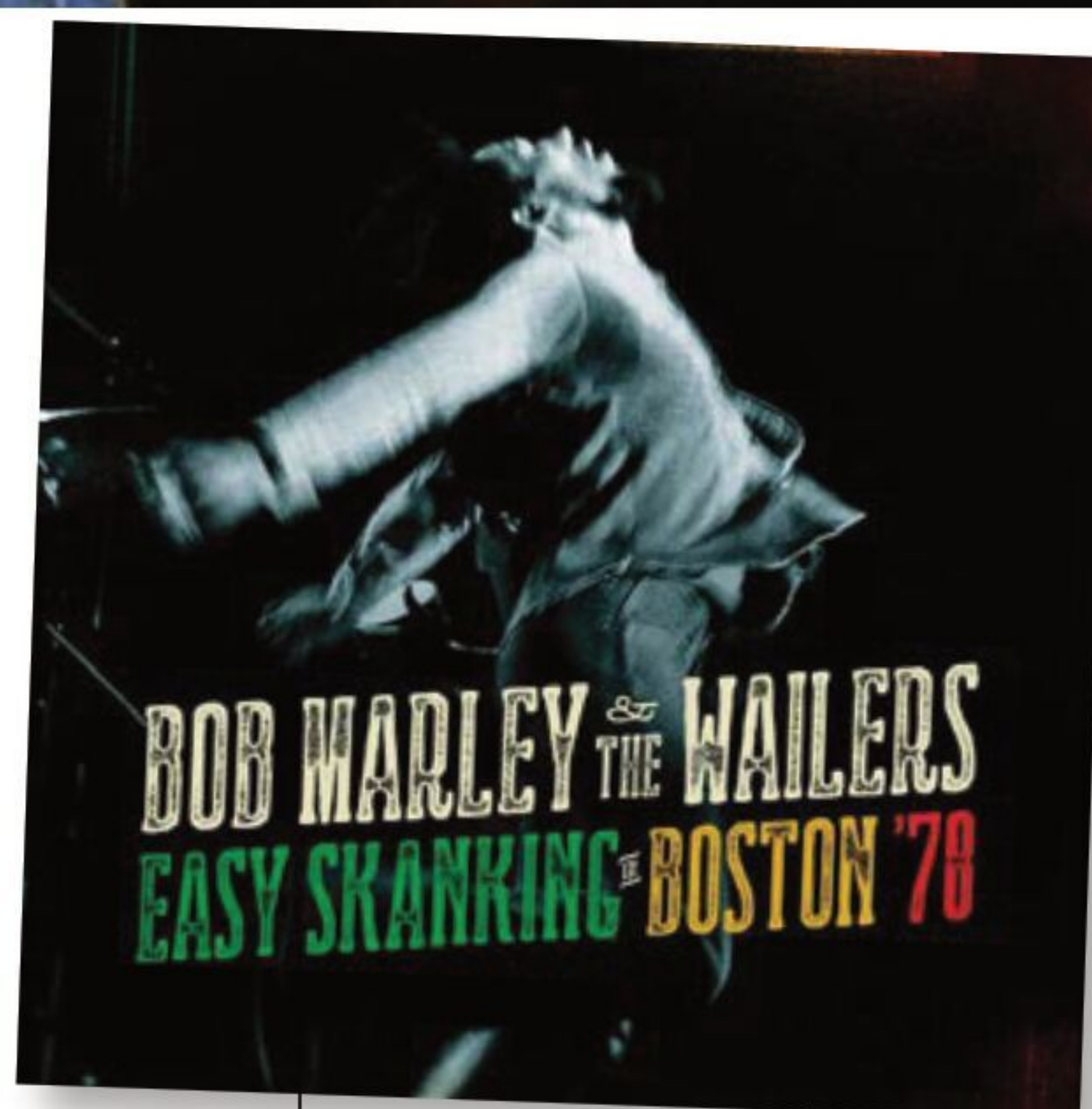
seven sensational tracks taken from a 1973 recording at the Record Plant in front of a tiny audience. The Wailers – with Joe Higgs standing in for Bunny Wailer – were in the US to promote *Burnin'* by supporting Sly And The Family Stone, but had been dropped after a handful of dates. Replacement shows were swiftly arranged, which led to this intimate performance in San Francisco broadcast by local radio station KSAN. The tracks capture Marley shortly before the mainstream makeover and with the innate rawness bleeding into a sense of the spiritual on “Slave Driver” and “Burnin’ & Lootin’”. “Kinky Reggae” has a ska-ish bop that is never quite recaptured in the studio, while the album also includes the terrific “Walk The Proud Land” and Tosh’s smart, angry “You Can’t Blame The Youth”. The radio tracks are rounded off with some *Natty Dread* out-takes (including the previously unreleased “Am-A-Do), an out-of-place seven-minute “I Shot The Sheriff” from the Lyceum in 1975 and excerpts of an interview with Marley from that same year. Listeners could order a transcript from Island if they struggled to comprehend the Jamaican patois. As a rare live document of the pre-Island Wailers, this is essential.

Moving into the modern era of archival archaeology, three old concerts have

surfaced. **Live At The Roxy**

★★★ was recorded in Hollywood in ’76 during the *Rastaman Vibration* tour. Broadcast by an LA radio station, it was bootlegged almost immediately before finally being officially released, firstly in truncated form on the second disc of a 2002 deluxe reissue of *Rastaman Vibration* and then as a standalone two-CD release. This 2003 version included a 24-minute encore medley of “Get Up, Stand Up/No More Trouble/War”. Recorded in a smaller room than *Live!* and *Babylon By Bus*, the vibe is a tad more intimate and noticeably mellower, at least until the intoxicating encore, which is the stand-out moment.

Easy Skanking In Boston ’78 ★★★ came out in 2015, marking the first of a series of archival releases. It’s another excellent concert, with a particularly strident “Them Belly Full” and a 10-minute “Jamming” amid a familiar setlist of anthems and hits. More from the archive is clearly to come, but for now the final word should go to **Live Forever: The Stanley Theatre, Pittsburgh, PA, September 23, 1980** ★★★. Released in



Above: sleeve for a 2015 archive release culled from the *Kaya* tour in 1978

2011, this is the final concert Marley ever played, a sold-out show held a couple of days after Marley had collapsed in Central Park and which he refused to cancel. No concert could probably sustain that weight of historical hindsight, and in truth *Live Forever* is no more than solid, despite glorious performances from Junior Marvin and the Barrett brothers. Marley is impassioned but tired, forcing the I Three to take on a little more than usual – “Is This Love” wavers and it’s even possible to detect a note of wistfulness when he laments “the great friends we’ve lost along the way” during “No Woman, No Cry”. Highlights include a gorgeous “Natural Mystic” and fierce “Crazy Baldhead”, and the dramatic one-two of a choppy “Exodus” followed by “Redemption Song”. There’s also the chance to hear live versions of later material such as “Zimbabwe”, “Work” (taken from a different sound source) and “Zion Train”. The concert concludes with an imploring “Get Up, Stand Up”, fittingly perhaps the final song Marley ever performed live. 🙏

MISCELLANY

BY MARK BENTLEY

WHEN THE 7" S CLASH

Bob Marley on single

WHERE do you even start with a Marley singles discography? With an estimated 200+ single and EP issues globally, spanning from 1962's "Judge Not" (credited to Robert Marley And Beverley's All-Stars, and issued on entrepreneur Leslie Kong's Beverley's label) to the plethora of post-mortem remixes and reissues, the history of Bob Marley on

single is almost unprecedentedly complex. The Wailers' rise – and Marley's fame, both in his lifetime and after his death – has meant multiple issues and reissues of material. And it's a bugger to untangle that, as you'll know if you've read Peter Watts' Compilations piece on p114. People have tried: there are some useful discography resources online for the committed.

This complexity is partly due to the interconnectedness of the '60s Jamaican music scene – with musicians, studios and labels closely linked, and act names/label credits changing with fluidity. Furthermore, the 7" single was pretty much the only unit of reggae record sales in the '60s, and in both Jamaica and the UK, Wailers singles were issued through multiple channels.

Island secured rights to distribute the first Wailers' releases in the UK, and would often issue singles in batches – that's why six singles were issued between March and June 1965 alone.

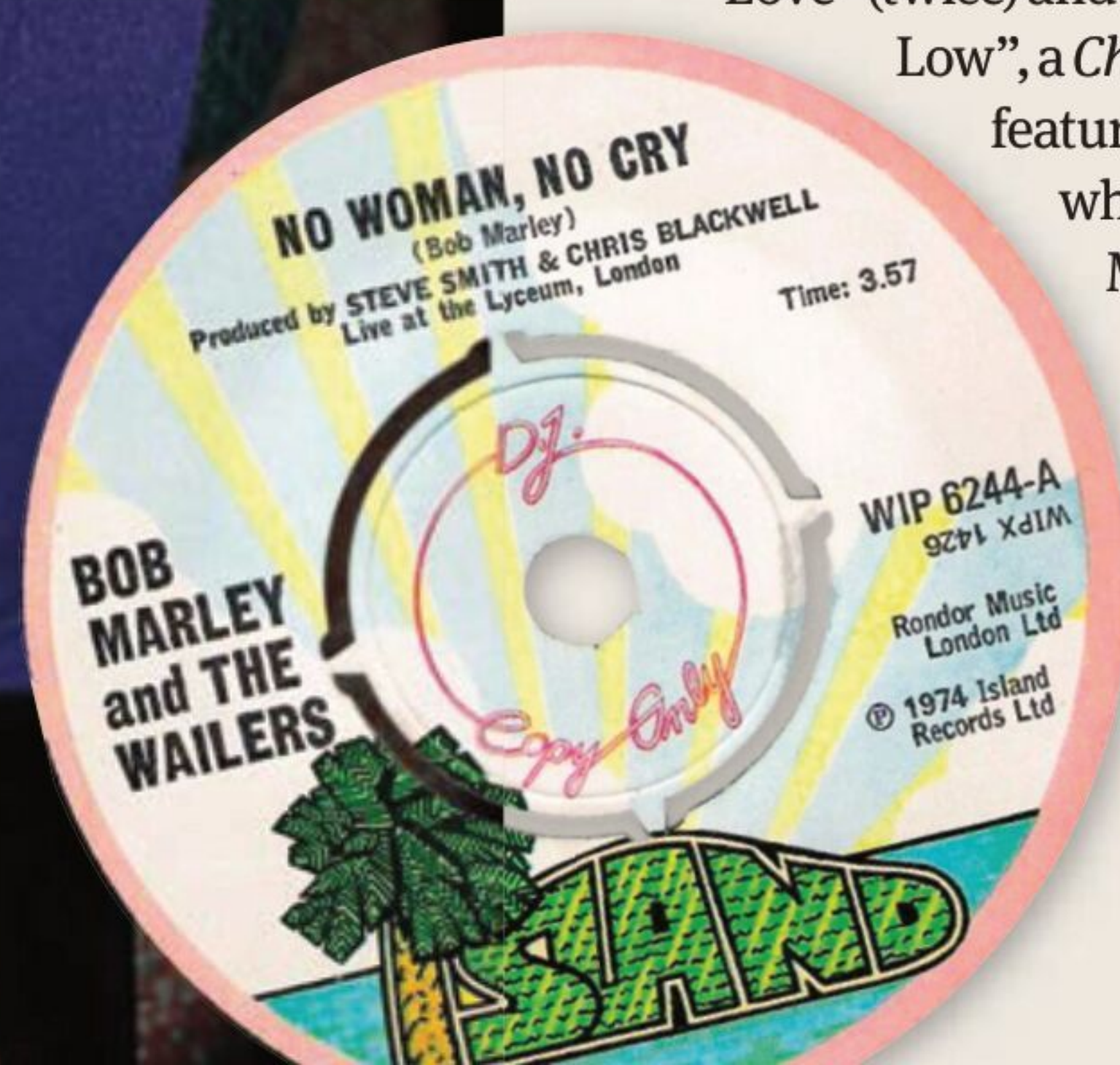
The trick of splitting A/B-sides with other artists was common, and multiple labels got in on the act. In the '60s and early '70s Wailers material appeared in the UK on a who's-who of reggae imprints: Coxsone, Studio One, Doctor Bird, Fab, Trojan, Unity, and Upsetter. Island Records itself makes the point on its website: "Before the Wailers signed to Island, reggae had been sold only as singles and on cheaply produced compilations... The [album recording contract] relationship that developed was unprecedented."

Much is made today of Marley's global appeal from the mid '70s onwards, but it's worth noting how little impact even his biggest songs have made on the pop charts. He fared well in the UK – nine Top 10 hits, including the 1975 breakthrough "No Woman, No Cry" (No 8). But in the USA, his biggest single is a lowly No 51, for "Roots Rock Reggae".

"Exodus" was one of his better performing singles Stateside, and that stalled at an insulting No 103. For one country where he was a true chart star, we need to look to New Zealand. There Marley scored a raft of Top 10s and three No 1 singles: "One Love" (twice) and "Turn Your Lights Down Low", a *Chant Down Babylon* release featuring Lauryn Hill. For those who love an unlikely fact, Marley's highest-charting UK single might fit the bill. It's "Sun Is Shining" – of course! – credited to Bob Marley vs Funkstar De Luxe, which made No 3 in 1999.



Marley inspects a single, 1980



GET UP, BRAND UP

Merchandising and the Marley name

LIKE Che Guevara and John Lennon, Marley's visage has adorned a billion student dorm rooms, an enduring emblem of peace, love and spiritual freedom. Marley iconography has been commercially exploited by merchandisers, pre- and post-mortem, and the array of product available today is brain-pickling. A small selection proves the point: search on Amazon for "Bob Marley T-shirt" and you'll get 2,994 results. Ben & Jerry's has a Bob Marley One Love flavour ice cream, complete with chocolatey peace signs. And of course there's even Marley Natural, a family-sanctioned cannabis product line aimed at the US states where the herb is legal.

Marley Natural has a featured section on official site *bobmarley.com* – here you can buy all manner of merchandise, including an intriguing selection of room mists that will, apparently, "uplift your senses". But this is where you'll also find information on one of the driving forces behind the Marley family business model. That's the 1Love foundation, a global non-profit organisation, which has reportedly completed 27 fundraising and awareness projects, generating \$1.3 million in donations and "changing 255,250 lives". Its mission statement is worth repeating: "By aligning with charities and causes that support education, commit to protecting the earth, and invest time and resources into the wellbeing of humanity, 1Love empowers people around the world to enact lasting change."

This serious commitment is mirrored elsewhere. A percentage of profits from the sale of House Of Marley audio

equipment is directed to 1Love, and it's this sub-brand that is likely to interest the music fan. Mainly known for classy-looking headphones, House Of Marley is – from the records we have found – a small business established in 2010, based out of Commerce Township, Michigan. It's part of a larger US distribution group that supplies personal wellbeing accessories and equipment, including footbaths, scent diffusers and fitness monitors. The headphones themselves are on-message, with Rasta-style cabling, recyclable aluminium and forest-certified wood, and supplied in environmentally friendly packaging. That they sound pretty good too is probably a bonus. Audiophile magazine *What HiFi*'s verdict is clear: "Just know that you can get better outright sound quality elsewhere for the same sort of money."

The UK site, *thehouseofmarley.co.uk*, offers a wide range of Marley audio paraphernalia, including turntables and Bluetooth speakers.

Finally, in one of June 2017's more eye-catching pieces of business news, a consortium of investors featuring Bob's youngest son, Damian "Junior Gong" Marley, successfully acquired smokers' bible *High Times* magazine. This US-focused specialist title has a circulation of 236,000 monthly subscribers, and is probably the world's most famous cannabis brand; the "wine aficionado of the cannabis industry", according to CEO Adam Levin. A typical issue

might feature retailer reviews, recipes for gourmet ganja edibles, and news and analysis of the political fight for legalisation. You figure the old man would be proud.



Onstage at the Rainbow Theatre in London, 1977

CATCH A FILM

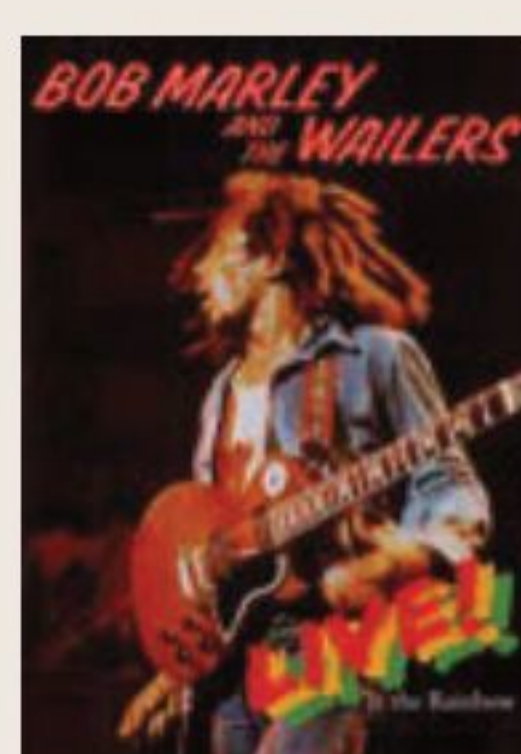
A Bob Marley videography

THERE are a lot of DVDs (and old VHS tapes) out there that purport to be "essential viewing" for the Marley fan. For this list, we've chosen widely available in-print releases that cover the bases of his life and career.



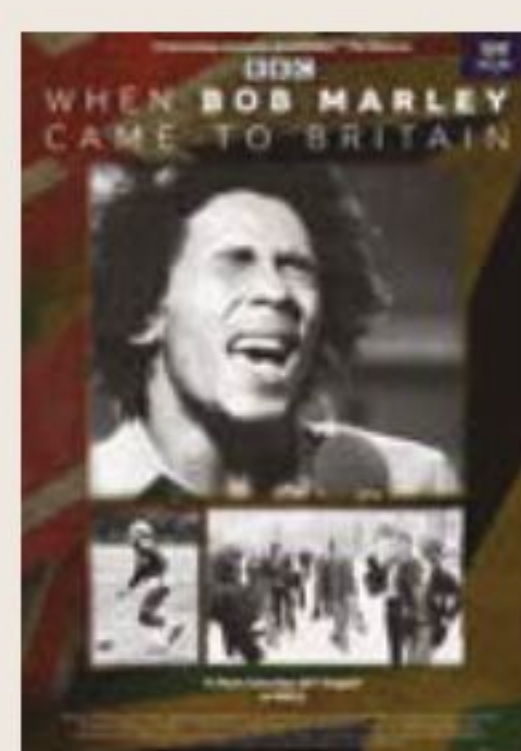
MARLEY 2012

Start here. Kevin "Touching The Void" MacDonald's startling official documentary – which skilfully blends archival footage and interviews with Ziggy, Rita, Bunny, Aston and more – is an absorbing, searching journey into the man and his music. Its two-plus hours find time to explore Marley's darker corners too, and it's been rightfully praised as definitive.



LIVE AT THE RAINBOW, 1977

A double DVD from the Finsbury Park venue in summer '77. This is a showcase of the man's joyous, passionate stagecraft and all the evidence you need that Marley was one of music's all-time great live acts. Good extras, too – go for the two-disc version, which features award-winning documentary *Caribbean Nights: The Bob Marley Story*, made in 1982.



WHEN BOB MARLEY CAME TO BRITAIN 2020

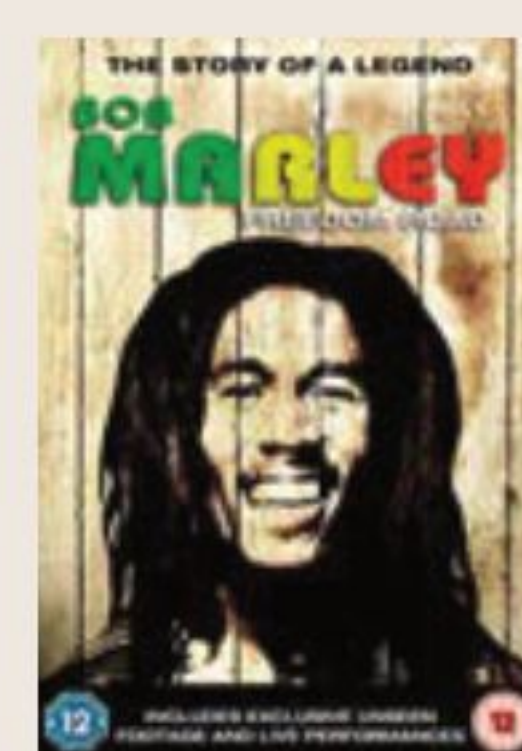
"He blew the roof off with positive vibrations," says Marcia Griffiths from the I Threes and it's hard to argue with that. An hour-long BBC documentary on Bob's relationship with the UK, made on the occasion of his 75th birthday celebrations. Lovely anecdotal stuff: Peckham and Southampton – claim your part in the Marley story! On

iPlayer for the next seven months...



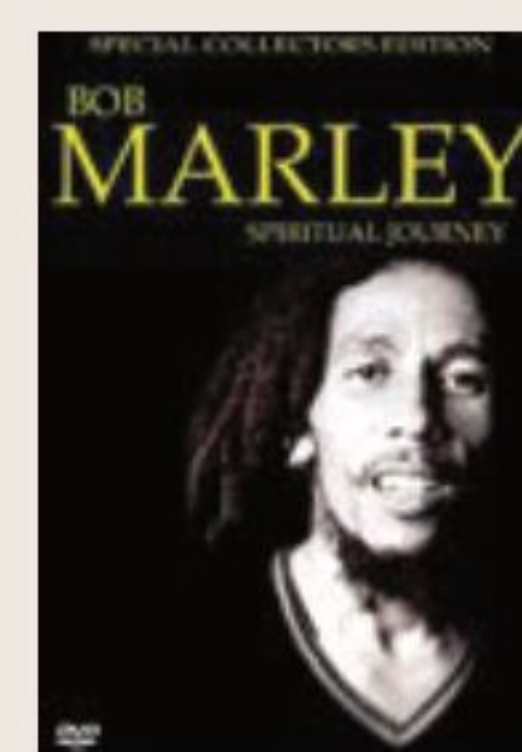
UPRISING LIVE 2014

His last tour, documented. This is a terrific June 13, 1980 show from Dortmund's Westfalenhalle, first shown on German Television's celebrated *Rockpalast* programme. Featuring a fan-friendly, big-hitting tracklist, it has been restored from the original footage "to the best possible quality". It's a little grainy in places, but the performance is hot, hot, hot. Incredible to think that Marley would be gone within 12 months.



FREEDOM ROAD: THE STORY OF A LEGEND 2007, REPACKAGED 2012

Sonia Anderson's bijou 54-minute documentary positions itself as a primer on Marley's life and music, but the release of *Marley* rather eclipsed its usefulness and insights: Still, it has some nice footage and decent I-was-there interviews, making it worth your time as a companion piece.



SPIRITUAL JOURNEY 2005

One of the many cash-in style DVDs out there, the title promises to explore Bob Marley's life and faith. But the content descends into old clips and commentary from odd interviewee choices, "people who were close to him", apparently. A shame, as the one criticism levelled at 2012's *Marley* – from Bunny Wailer himself – is that it doesn't analyse the man's Rastafarianism in any real depth... ➤



With Rita Marley and Bunny Wailer at a gold-disc ceremony, 1980

JAMMING!

Marley's key collaborators



"STEPPING RAZOR" - PETER TOSH (1944-1987)

The man born Winston Hubert McIntosh – and also known as Peter Touch – was an early collaborator

with Marley and Bunny Wailer, a founding member of the Wailing Wailers in 1963 and a prime mover in the group's commitment to the Rastafarian faith. A talented multi-instrumentalist – guitar, keyboards, violin – he was an influential figure from the outset, and may even have taught Marley to play guitar. A co-founder of the Tuff Gong imprint, he left the Wailers in 1974, after Island Records decided against releasing a solo album.

His post-Wailers reputation rests on a brace of brilliant solo records: the passionate pro-marijuana manifesto *Legalize It* (Virgin, 1976), and the caustic *Equal Rights* (1977), featuring a version of Tosh's co-write, "Get Up, Stand Up". The Glimmer Twins (that's Mick and Keef) co-produced 1978's *Bush Doctor* – released in the US on the Rolling Stones' label – and subsequent releases feature stalwarts Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. Widely recognised as a major figure in reggae in and out of the Wailers, Tosh was tragically shot and killed in a robbery at his Kingston home.



BUNNY WAILER (1947-)

A friend of Marley's from childhood, Neville O'Riley Livingston is also Marley's step-brother – Bunny's father, Toddy, lived with Marley's mother, Cedella. His percussion skills helped to define not only the Wailers' sound, but

the developing rhythms of reggae through the 1960s. He contributed lead and backing vocals to many early recordings, but a 14-month prison sentence for possession in 1967 sidelined him temporarily.

Like his great friend and co-collaborator Tosh – whose son Andrew was also Bunny's nephew! – he left the Wailers after a dispute with Island. For Bunny, reportedly, the label's insistence that the band play "freak clubs" was not consistent with his strong Rastafarian faith. A three-time Grammy winner, and recipient of the Order Of Jamaica, Bunny is unchallenged as reggae's leading elder statesman. The pick of his 20+ solo albums include essential roots reggae release *Blackheart Man* (1976), *Protest* (1977), and the Sly and Robbie-helmed *Bunny Wailer Sings The Wailers*, a reworking of key Wailers cuts.

THEI THREE

Together, Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt and Marcia Griffiths delivered the superstar backing vocals for Marley's world-straddling mid-'70s records and tours. As Bob's wife, Rita had worked with the Wailers from the '60s; solo albums include *Rita Marley* (1980) and *We Must Carry On* (1988). The major figure in Marley's life and legacy, her story is told candidly in 2003 autobiography *No Woman, No Cry*, which should be on the homework list for every Marley fan.

Once of the rocksteady group Gaylettes, Judy Mowatt is perhaps the lowest profile of the three. It's a shame: as well as Wailer-era songwriting credits under the name Judy Watt, she has recorded a clutch of terrific solo albums, notably *Mellow Mood* (1975) and *Mr Dee-J* (1981). Her best remains the self-produced *Black Woman* (1980), featuring the masterly gospel anthem "Many Are Called".

Marcia Griffiths was already well known as half



of the high-charting duo Bob And Marcia, whose "Young Gifted And Black" single and LP were major UK hits. Possessed of a smooth, soulful voice, her solo releases include the overlooked *Sweet Bitter Love* (Trojan, 1974), *At Studio One* (1979) and the celebratory *Marcia Griffiths & Friends* (2012), 38 duets with reggae's new wave of stars.



THE BARRETT BROTHERS

Aston (on bass) and Carlton 'Carly' Barrett (on drums and percussion) were core members of uber-producer Lee 'Scratch' Perry's

in-house band The Upsetters. They worked with Marley and The Wailers on a permanent basis from 1969/1970 to Marley's death. The brothers stayed following the departure of Tosh and Bunny in 1974, and – with Sly and Robbie – are the most vaunted and recognisable rhythm section in reggae.

Aston's deep, fluid basslines underpin Marley's '70s recordings, and solo efforts by Tosh, Bunny, Jackie Mittoo, Horace Andy, Augustus Pablo and more. His expertise as a sound engineer and producer was exploited on *Exodus* and Burning Spear's *Hail H.I.M.* Compilation *Familyman In Dub* (1999) is a decent entry point to his solo work.

Carly features on every Wailers recording from 1970, and his inventive approach to recording and live performance resulted in some co-credits: "Them Belly Full" on *Natty Dread*. He died aged just 36 in 1987, killed by a gunman in Kingston.



POSITIVE VIBRATIONS!

A brief guide to Bob Marley collectables

In his 1994 UK No 1, “Baby Come Back”, Pato Banton memorably regrets the revenge-theft of his “CD collection of Bob Marley”. One hopes he didn’t replace his original vinyl collection with said compact discs, as original albums and singles have long since proved to be the better investment.

Marley is to reggae what The Beatles are to rock and pop, and collecting Marley and Wailers product is a similarly academic discipline. Add to that the fact that reggae itself has long been one of the most collectable genres and you can see that for the right releases, in the right condition, the prices for vinyl are incredibly strong.

While your original, much-played copy of *Legend* is not going to get the collectors excited, one thing in your collection might. The first UK release of *Catch A Fire*, on Island, with its iconic top opening Zippo-lighter sleeve, is a landmark collectable. Mint-condition copies change hands for upwards of £400. Other standard issue albums are far less pricey, but the power of the vinyl revival means that albums that were once charity-shop staples – *Exodus* and *Kaya*, say – are making £20+ as long as they are in superb condition. Promos, inevitably, can carry higher values. *Rastaman Vibration*, in its chunky hemp burlap covering with accompanying photobook, is a great example, and is worth around \$600 in mint.

As noted earlier, the 7” single was the major medium for reggae releases in the 1960s, and there are

myriad different releases and forms to find them in. If you’re lucky enough to have any early Wailers singles – on Island, Coxsone et al – then these will be worth very decent money. Mint values start around £25 and move up – as an example, take 1970’s “Jailhouse” on Bamboo records, with John Holt’s “A Stranger In Love” on the B-side. That’s a £70+ collectable. Copies of first UK Island single, “Judge Not”, have sold for in

excess of £1,500, but the star rarities are the Tuff Gong issue of “Selassie Is The Chapel” and the hyper-rare Coxsone issue of “Diamond Baby”. One copy of the latter sold for \$3,000 online in 2007.

But it’s a jungle out there. If you think you have a rare Marley record, the best advice is to seek out a specialist. Memorabilia with a personal connection to Marley is seriously sought after, as long as there is full provenance/proof of authenticity in place. His signature is rare, and valuable. A signed copy of *Survival* made \$1,400 in 2015, while an autographed copy of *Exodus* sold at Christie’s for \$4,200 in 2008. A 1980 tour programme, signed by all members, nearly doubled that at the same Marley-themed auction. Handwritten items

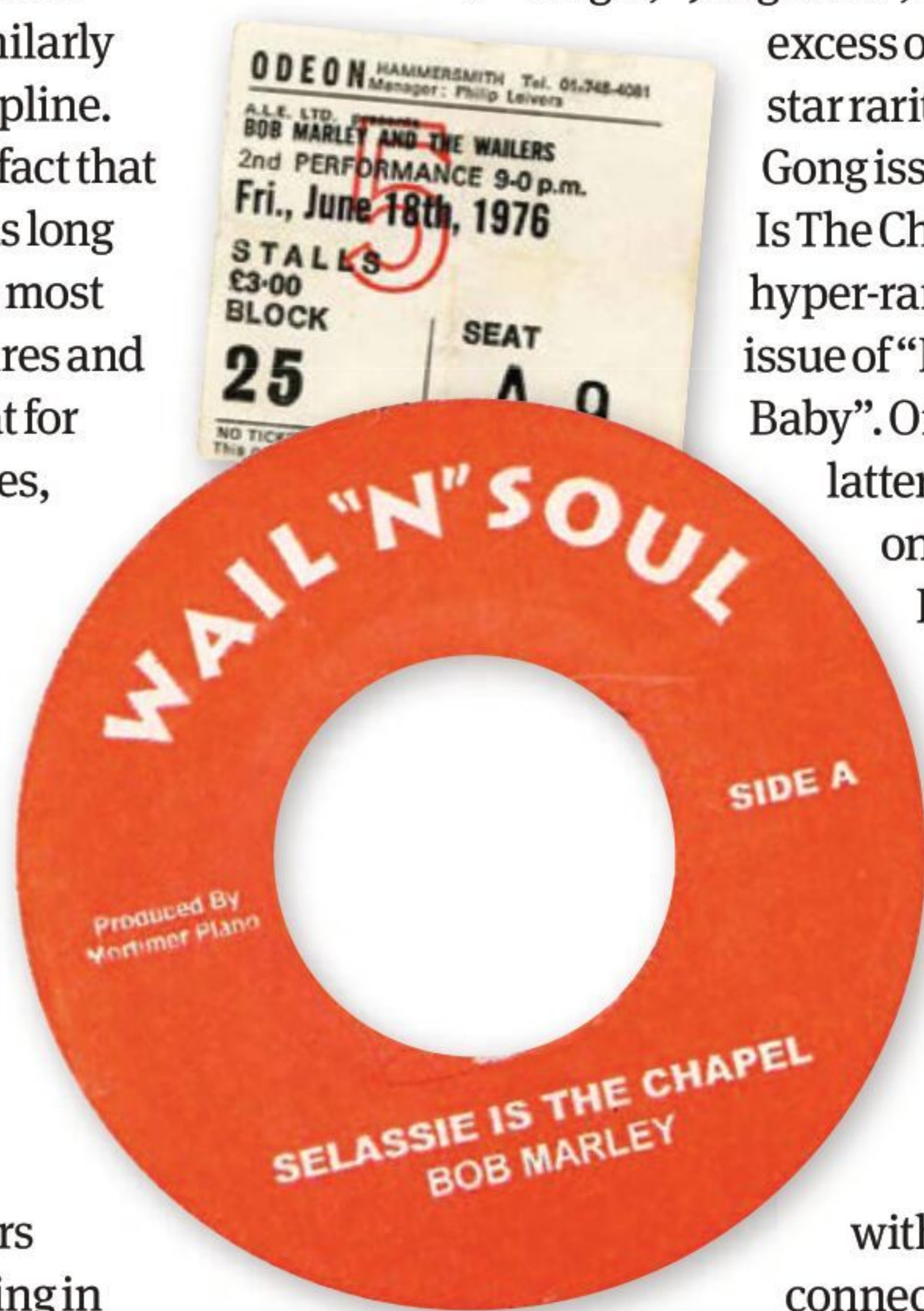
have grail-like status, and the notebook once owned by Marley’s art director Neville Garrick – which features setlists, stage directions and, most notably, early versions of lyrics of *Kaya*-era material – made a huge \$72,000 in 2006.



Marley in front of his house at 56 Hope Road, Kingston, JA, July 9, 1979

Live ephemera – posters and programmes, say – are a growing area of collectability, and memorabilia specialists are putting out the call for

the best Marley material. UK company Tracks – known principally for its Beatles specialisation – offers a rough “what we’ll pay” pricing guideline. Its dealers will offer £600 for signed posters, down to £20 for a ticket stub. That’s a lot more than the £3 it would have cost you to see the Wailers at the Hammersmith Odeon in June 1976. But being there? Well, that must have been priceless. 🗿



TALKIN' BLUES

Bob Marley Interviews (Tuff Gong, 1982)



THE audio ‘Interviews’ disc was a staple of the ’80s, and this set – denied a full international release in 1982, but repackaged since as *So Much Things To Say* – is an intriguing collection-filler. A series of taped conversations from the ’70s with Jamaican broadcaster and personality Neville Willoughby, it’s remarkable for its openness. Marley’s responses are interposed with song excerpts, but it’s his force of personality, his views on faith, politics, war and the music industry that will grab you, and stay with you.



Stop Me

...If you've heard this one before

1977. Exiled in Chelsea, Bob Marley is introduced to the local weed, police and the punky reggae party. NEIL SPENCER bears witness

In early 1977, Bob Marley was in exile in West London, his whereabouts a closely guarded secret. Since the attempt on his life the previous December, he had been undercover, at first in the US and then in London, where he and several of the Wailers occupied a townhouse at the shabbier end of Chelsea.

In reality, Marley's whereabouts would not have been too hard to discover. The house in Oakley Street soon became a destination for the capital's Rastafarian faithful and for sundry relatives and hangers-on, while the posse of dreads Bob led in football games in nearby Battersea Park was, to say the least, an unusual sight.

Otherwise, he kept a low profile, content to work and record the songs that would become *Exodus* and *Kaya*, and to pursue his romance with Cindy Breakspere. There were new relationships, too, not least Bob's friendship with the Ethiopian royal family; Haile Selassie's son and his daughters were fellow exiles in London following the Marxist takeover of their country, three years previously.

In advance of the release of *Exodus*, Island records offered *NME* an exclusive interview with Bob that I eagerly accepted, taking with me photographer Dennis Morris. Bob was utterly relaxed, dressed in tracksuit, sandals and a black tam, sat on a day bed, guitar beside him. On his left hand was a large signet ring bearing the Ethiopian lion; once the property of Selassie, it was a recent gift from the late Emperor's grandson, Prince Asfa-Wossen.

Halfway through the interview we were interrupted by the arrival of a young dread I recognised – Don Letts, Roxy Club DJ and dude about town, who was there on a vital mission: delivering herb. Don was toggled out in '77 street style, sporting a pair of trousers smothered in multiple zips. Bob regarded them with a wry smile.

"What kinda pant you call them?" he asked.

"Some kind of mountaineering thing?"

"Nah, punk rock style," Don shot back.

"Punk?" queried Bob.

"Young people, no money, love music."

"I shoulda been wearing those last week, the police nah find nothing with so many pocket," Bob laughed, a reference I would only understand later, when it emerged that he had recently been busted for weed.

The bust was an opportunistic stop-and-search by the Ladbroke Grove cops. The Wailers were recording at Basing Street Studios, a former church situated in what is now a high-end residential area, but back then was close to Notting Hill's 'frontline', an area rife with dealers and illegal shebeens. For

the cops, a clutch of dreads with a problematic car was an invitation too good to miss and they duly found what they were looking for under the driver's seat. "Me claim all herb!" declared Bob dramatically, though the cops also found a Thai stick in Family Man's sock.

One would think that a celebrity drug bust – not least that of a man famous for parading his use of

ganja – would make headlines, but somehow Island Records managed to keep the incident low-key. It was only when Marley appeared at Marylebone Magistrates' Court in early May that any real publicity was generated. Marley attended court in red gold and green tam and khaki jacket, and he and his lawyer argued that, for Rastas, marijuana was a sacred herb sanctioned by the Bible in Psalms. The magistrate was lenient – "I know this is almost legal in your country" – and fined Marley £50, Family Man £20.

Marley's initial puzzlement about punk – indeed, his hostility to it – softened during his London stay, as English sidekicks such as Don Letts and journalist Vivien Goldman clued him into punk's passion for reggae and played him The Clash's version of Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves". It was all rebel music. A few months later he was in the studio with Scratch Perry, cutting "Punky Reggae Party", not his finest moment, but a vital part of the soundtrack to 1977. 📍

HIS HOSTILITY TO PUNK SOFTENED IN LONDON

Bob Marley at a London hotel, February 2, 1978

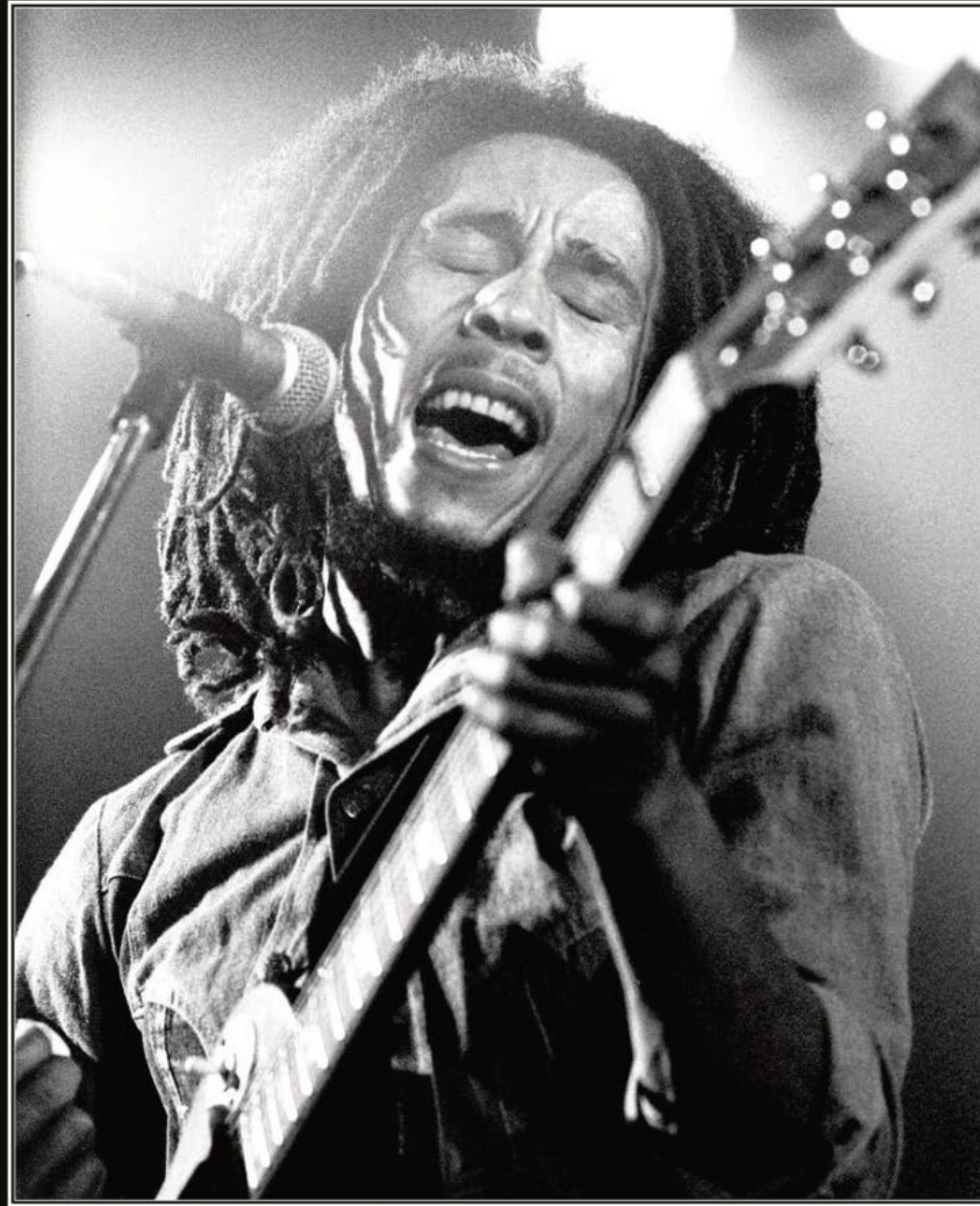


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